

BEADLE'S Dime New York Library

Copyrighted, 1896, by BEADLE AND ADAMS.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER AT THE NEW YORK, N. Y., POST OFFICE.

February 12, 1896.

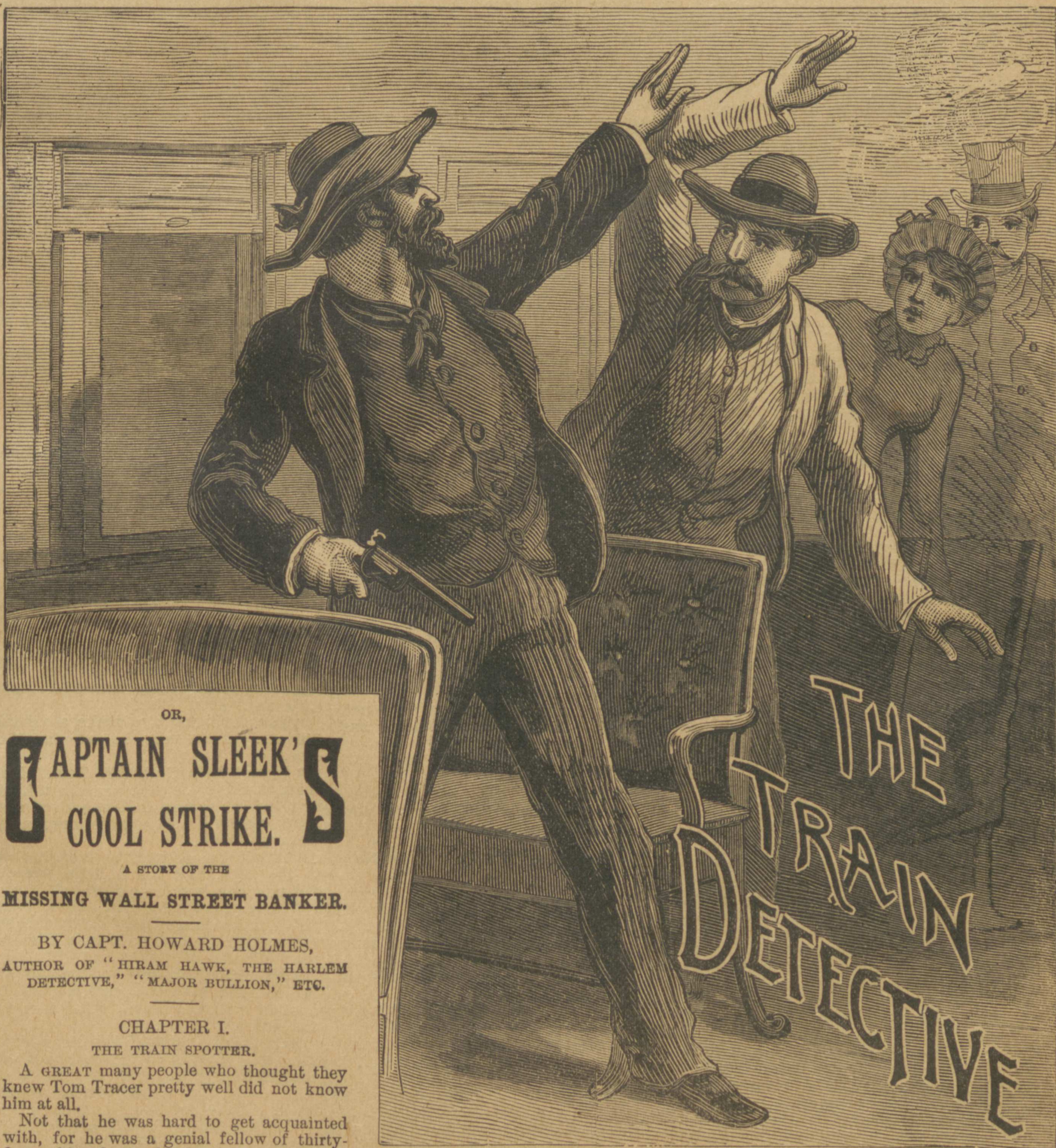
No. 903.

Published Every
Wednesday.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,
98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year.

Vol. LXX.



OR,

CAPTAIN SLEEK'S COOL STRIKE.

A STORY OF THE
MISSING WALL STREET BANKER.

BY CAPT. HOWARD HOLMES,
AUTHOR OF "HIRAM HAWK, THE HARLEM
DETECTIVE," "MAJOR BULLION," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAIN SPOTTER.

A GREAT many people who thought they knew Tom Tracer pretty well did not know him at all.

Not that he was hard to get acquainted with, for he was a genial fellow of thirty-five and handsome, but he never sought new

BUT THE HAND OF THE TRAIN DETECTIVE WAS TOO QUICK FOR CAPTAIN SLEEK.

friends, but had the faculty of keeping all his old ones.

Some people believed that he had nothing at all to do, but inhabited the house in which he was often found when not down town or out somewhere, but this class of citizens knew the very least about his business.

It was ten o'clock one night in the middle of the summer, and Tom Tracer was alone in the sumptuous little parlor to the right of the hall.

He was smoking as if in deep thought, when the bell tinkled in the hall, and, not having any servants that night, he answered the ring in person.

He opened the door to stand face to face with a young man whose countenance was white and serious, as the gentleman saw it in the light of his lamps.

Tom led the way to the parlor, and motioned his visitor to a chair.

The youth hesitated and looked at the other one as if he had perpetrated the blunder of getting into the wrong house.

"You are Mr. Tracer, are you not?" he asked.

"That's my name. You want to see me, I presume."

"I do. The case is an urgent one, and I have been directed to you by Mr. Somerset."

"Colonel Somerset?" smiled Tom.

"Yes, the railroad official. He is just quitting the city for the summer, and I happened to catch him in his office just as he was about to go to the train."

"All right. What is it, Mr—"

"My name is Flint—Frank Flint. He gave me this note to you, Colonel Somerset did."

With this the young man handed Tom Tracer a folded note, which he at once took and carried over to the table light.

"I see. You want my professional assistance," said he, looking up and catching his caller's eye. "It seems to be a complicated matter."

"It is so, to us at least. It is a mystery which seems to smack of the gravest crime imaginable. Shall I tell you the particulars as we know them, though they are few and very vague?"

"If you please, Mr. Flint. Do you smoke?"

"Not now," and the young man pushed back the cigars which Tom Tracer had shoved toward him.

"Mr. Abel Marks is a prominent gentleman who is connected with one of the foremost firms in Wall street. He is about fifty-five years of age and is quite wealthy. His household consists of a daughter, he being a widower himself, having buried his wife within the last three years.

"I am well acquainted with him, having been somewhat connected with his firm, but not in a very important way. I am called in at odd times to go over the accounts of the house and to adjust the books if they need adjusting. In this manner I have become pretty well acquainted with Abel Marks. I like the man, as do all with whom he is connected, both in a business way and socially; but just now we don't know where he is."

A smile came to Tom Tracer's face and lingered there a little while.

"I infer from the note from Colonel Somerset that it is a case of mysterious disappearance, to say the least," he said.

"That is true. It is the deepest mystery I ever had anything to do with, but you may have seen deeper ones and may be able to throw some light upon this one. Four nights ago Mr. Marks went to the Grand Central to take the train for Albany on a matter of very important business. Indeed, from what I can gather, this business involved many thousands of dollars, and the transacting of it successfully would increase his wealth nearly half a million."

"Quite an important mission."

"Certainly. Now, sir, from the time Mr. Abel Marks entered the train all trace of him has been lost."

Frank Flint stopped as if he thought he had visibly impressed the railroad de-

tective with the importance of the case in hand.

Tom Tracer reached over and carefully selected another cigar from the box and picked up a match.

"He entered the train, did he?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. He was seen to do that, and I may add that the train pulled out on time with Mr. Marks on board."

"He was unaccompanied, eh?"

"He always went alone, would not take any one with him, though on several occasions his daughter wanted to accompany him, he having had for years trouble with his heart. She did not know that he was going to Albany and was not aware of his absence from home till the morning after his departure, when a note left in the office for her informed her of his trip."

"You seem deeply interested in this matter, Mr. Flint?"

The young man flushed and for a moment averted his gaze.

"I am. Miss Nora and I are good friends, and anything that concerns her affects me."

"I see," said the train spotter, as he blew a puff of smoke ceilingward.

"I believe I have gone fairly well over the ground," continued Flint. "There is little to tell. Mr. Marks has simply dropped out of sight. I called on Colonel Somerset, with whom I am slightly acquainted, and he sent me to you with the note I have delivered."

Tracer looked away, and his gaze seemed to rest on a certain spot on the opposite wall.

"What else have you done, Mr. Flint?" he asked, without looking at his caller. "Have you gone up to Albany to see if Mr. Marks ever reached that city?"

"I have not. It was not necessary. We know he did not, sir."

"Ha, you know, do you?"

"Yes, sir—in this way: The firm with which Mr. Marks intended to transact the important business has telegraphed asking what delayed him."

"Oh, that way, eh?"

"Those people do not know anything about the missing man, having heard nothing from him since the day before his departure."

"Did he carry any money with him?"

"His junior partner does not know to a certainty. He may have taken five hundred dollars, but that, you know, would not tempt some men."

"That is true, Mr. Flint, but it would tempt a great many, on the other hand."

"Common robbers!"

"Dub them what you please, but it would tempt a great many men," reiterated the detective.

"I'll admit that, but Mr. Marks must have had enemies who were on the watch."

"Had he enemies?"

"I cannot say. Miss Nora says not, for he was a home body and never had any suspicious visitors."

"That's in his favor. I'll look into this matter."

"When, please?"

Frank Flint was a little nervous and he rose as he spoke.

"Right away."

"Thank you. I will say this for Nora also."

"Does she know of your call?"

"No, sir. I did not tell her, for she is wrought up over the vanishment and thinks that her father has been murdered. I confess that it looks a little that way to me, but we'll hope it is not that bad."

"Where do you live, Mr. Flint?"

"I have rooms fronting Madison Square. Here's my card," and the youth placed a delicate card at the detective's elbow.

Without picking it up, but merely giving it a glance, the detective left his chair and in another minute came back alone once more, his caller having taken his departure.

Then he noticed the card and picked it up.

"Pretty good rooms for a man like that," was all the audible remark he made as he placed the card in his pocket.

Half an hour later a man who looked somewhat like the train spotter in build entered the Grand Central Depot.

He stood for a little while in the glare of the thousand-and-one lights and watched the sea of humanity which ebbed and flowed under the mighty roof.

He walked forward and came upon a man who sat in one of the seats with his head on his hand.

"Shivers?" said the detective.

The man started at sound of the name and smiled when he saw who had addressed him.

"You're on duty yet, I see," continued Tom.

"It's endless duty, sir. It's the work I like, and it's better than the old, tracing the streets in all sorts of weather, with a chance to have your napper taken in the most approved style."

"It's a little better, Shivers, but these hot nights—"

"That's the only drawback," was the reply. "But it's to be cooler by and by, sir."

The Train Spotter drew the man into the darkest corner of the waiting room and they sat down.

"Where were you four nights ago, Shivers?" he asked.

"Here."

"When the 10:40 Express pulled out?"

"Yes, sir. I was out there with my eyes open."

"And saw nearly everybody, as usual?"

"I won't say that, Mr. Tom, for that's what no one can do in this human beehive. I saw a good many, though, who took the Express. In fact, I helped a gentleman on the train. I carried his valise for him."

"What sort of a man was he?"

"A tall man, as slim as a rail, with bronzed face and a squint in his left eye."

"But you didn't see a well-dressed gentleman about fifty, with a small valise, reddish in color?"

"With a soft hat which looked a little odd on his head, eh?"

"Perhaps, Shivers."

"I saw that man. He looked like a nabob, and when I accidentally knocked off his hat in helping the tall gentleman on the train he lost his temper and wanted to know why they kept such blunderers as me round here."

"You saw that man get on the train, did you, Shivers?"

"I did, and I saw him at the window when the train moved off. But he was not alone then."

"Why not?"

"The tall man was in the seat with him, and they were laughing about something which they seemed to appreciate as a good joke."

"You don't want to make a mistake, Shivers. This may be an important case."

"I can't help that, Mr. Tom. I saw them in the same seat and the tall man was tickled nearly to death over something, and while they were laughing the train pulled out."

Tom Tracer seemed to drop his gaze to the floor, and for a little while he did not look back into Shivers' face.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Tom!" cried Shivers, breaking away from the railroad ferret. "There's a man I want to see."

Tom Tracer turned and looked after the moving man and saw beyond him another person who attracted him from the first.

Shivers did not hail the stranger, but stopped suddenly and gave him a close, scrutinizing look.

In haste the depot detective came back.

"That's the tall man's pard, Mr. Tom. I saw him in the depot the night the two went away, and he seemed to be interested in them."

Tom Tracer moved cautiously after

the person thus designated by Shivers and followed him from the depot.

Outside, the stranger stepped into a cab and closed the door behind him.

As it moved off, Tom Tracer, always on the alert, entered another cab, saying to the driver:

"You see the cab yonder. Follow it, but at a respectful distance; but follow it!"

Away he went.

CHAPTER II.

A GOLD BUG'S FLIGHT.

Jarold Jenks, the business partner of Abel Marks, the missing man, was as well known on 'Change as his associate.

He was a person not quite as old as Marks, but with a better physique and a stronger will.

He was a married man, whose only child was a son past twenty-five and somewhat of a blade.

Blair Jenks, or "Prince Bullion," as he was called in certain circles, was a good-looking fellow who affected a great many rings and was lavish in his expenditures for wines.

Jarold, the father, was aware of his hopeful's escapades, but he thought best to furnish him with all the funds he wanted rather than try to stop the young blade in his headlong course.

About the hour of Tom Tracer's interview with Shivers, the depot detective, the parlor of the Jenks mansion was occupied by father and son.

Prince Bullion looked uncommonly well, and his clothes of the latest cut looked bright and new.

A magnificent lamp threw its light over the crimson cloth that covered the mahogany table, and a box of Havanas stood near the old banker's arm.

About the eyes of the elder Jenks there was a faded look, and his lips appeared to have lost a little color.

"It's not much, and look at the possible outcome," said the young man.

"I look at everything. There is nothing that escapes me in a business way."

"I know that. Have I ever made a bad investment?"

"You've been pretty shrewd, boy, and in that you take after your father; ha, ha!"

"Thanks," bowed Prince Bullion. "I say this is the chance of a lifetime. Think of it; there's a gold mine, literally speaking, in our grasp."

"But it's beyond the Rockies."

"Granted, and so is the unmined gold which will surely come to your coffers by and by."

"That's pretty good logic. But what of this company that offers you all these shares for a mere song? What do you know about it?"

"I know that I've investigated the matter and I'm satisfied. I can take twenty thousand and make a cool million."

"But, look here. I can't do anything till Abel Marks comes back," said Jarold Jenks.

"Oh, hang that partner of yours! Do you want him to come back and pluck the plum himself?"

"He won't do that. I must see him first."

"But where is he and when will he show up?"

Young Jenks leaned back in his chair, tipping it a little, and inserting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest.

"That's pretty hard to tell," said the banker. "I know that it is believed that he has vanished."

"It is. I can tell you something, father."

"What's that?"

"It's become a matter for the detectives. The mystery of Abel Marks' disappearance has been placed in their hands for solution."

Jarold Jenks started a little.

"Who did this?"

"The daughter, perhaps; that keen-eyed but deuced pretty girl of Marks'. All I know is that the case is in the hands of the ferrets, and that they're at work now."

"I had not heard of this, but I might have inferred it from what she said the last time she called at the office."

"Well, she's done it, and here you want me to wait till he comes back. What if there's a woman in the case? What if some one has knocked him over between here and Albany, and what if he never turns up at all? What will become of the gold mine?"

Jenks senior said nothing for a moment, but his gaze wandered away, nor did it return to his hopeful for a full minute.

All this time he was narrowly watched by Prince Bullion, whose sensual lips now and then curled with eagerness.

"You don't want me to wait now, do you?" said Blair.

Jarold Jenks did not reply.

"I've promised the gentlemen a reply to-night."

"Where are they?"

"At their rooms. I am to answer them by a certain hour, and it lacks but twenty minutes of the time. I can barely make it."

"I don't see how—"

"You must, father," broke in the youth. "You can't afford to lose this opportunity. Think of it! If I win, and I will 'strike it rich,' to use a western phrase, I will not come on to you again for another dollar, and that is something."

A faint smile came to the banker's mouth.

It was more than "something"; it was a great deal.

"I guess I'll let you make the venture," said Jarold Jenks, drawing out his check book and picking up a pen.

Blair's eyes seemed to swell in his head.

He did not breathe lest the faintest breath would break the spell and shatter the vase of fortune.

Slowly—for his hands trembled a little—Jarold Jenks drew up a check for twenty thousand dollars, carefully crossing his t's and dotting the i's as if on this his life depended.

When he pushed the check over to his son he said in a low voice:

"You might show this to-night and bind the bargain, but don't get it cashed; don't get the money on it till to-morrow afternoon. Can you manage this?"

"I think I can. By Jove! father, since you've been so liberal with me, I'll do it."

"Thanks, boy. Don't rush into a trap. I'm glad you see a good thing ahead, and now make sure of it."

"I'll catch the golden bird," laughed Blair, as he folded the check and placed it in his pocket-book.

The eyes of Jarold Jenks followed his only heir to the door in a longing manner, and for some time after Blair vanished the banker continued to regard the portal with eager looks.

All at once, however, he sprang up and crossed the room to another door.

In the hall beyond this door a dim light was burning, and here the banker, looking haggard now, as if in that single minute he had lived ten years, leaned against the wall and breathed hard.

"It's come the awful hour," said he in undertones. "It must be done."

He went up stairs and slipped down a hall till he reached a door, which he opened carefully.

Into the room beyond he went and approached a bed, upon which lay the figure of his sleeping wife.

Jarold Jenks stood beside the couch a moment and looked down upon the placid face of the partner of his bosom.

She did not stir, and all at once he bent over and kissed her.

In another second he was out of the room, his whole form in a strange tremor, and presently he was in the library on the first floor.

Flinging himself into a chair at the desk, he seized pen and paper and wrote fast for a spell.

But what he wrote he tore up and flung into the waste basket at one end of the desk.

"I won't do it, for I cannot," he cried. "I will leave nothing behind. It came at last. I must go."

Jarold Jenks left the house and caught a car far down town.

Something unseen seemed to accelerate his movements, and he walked rapidly.

He entered the little Wall Street office where more than one fortune had been made.

He pulled the curtains down and turned on the gas, but not very high.

"By this time Blair has found the vultures," said he. "Ere this he has bargained for a fraud, but it's the last pull he'll ever get from Jarold Jenks' pocket-book till the courts give him another. What a fool I've been! A fool? Would to God that were all!"

When he came out of the building he almost ran against a man who at that moment passed along.

There was no apology, and Jarold Jenks turned into Broadway.

From there he took a conveyance to the Grand Central Depot and alighted at the main entrance.

In a little while he stood in the flash of the many lights and looked about him.

"Safe! They don't know me here, because our customers don't take the late trains."

He laughed a little while he spoke and then turned pale once more.

With a quick, nervous movement he dragged the rim of his hat over his brow and faced the ticket agent.

"Where to, sir?"

The query startled him.

Jarold Jenks seemed at that moment to come to himself.

"I guess I won't go to-night," he stammered, turning back and walking away.

"All right, sir," replied the agent, and then he paid no more attention to the Wall Street banker.

Out into the open air once more, Jarold Jenks stopped and gasped.

"It's got to be elsewhere," said he. "I won't stay in New York another hour. I dare not. They've put the matter into the ferrets' hands, and that means an overhauling of matters and things. Why didn't Blair tell me sooner. I wonder into whose hands they've put the matter? I might buy them off. Did the girl do it? Is it her doings? And did she tell Blair himself?"

Jarold Jenks hailed a cab and sprang into it.

The order he gave was heard only by the Jehu, who jumped upon his box, and the vehicle rattled away.

"I wish I could hire the cabby to drive me to the ends of the earth," said the banker, as he fell back among the cushions and took a long breath. "What made me do it, anyhow? There was a bright future before me; but now—now—Some men are born fools, and I am one of that number!"

For some minutes the cab carried Jarold Jenks hither and thither over New York.

He did not go toward home.

He seemed to shun the house where he had been happy and where he had deserted his wife like a coward.

When the cab drew up he found himself in the darkest and dingiest part of the city.

He stepped out and for a moment looked bewilderingly around, then turned and bestowed a smile upon the driver.

"This is the corner you spoke of, sir. Maybe you've made a mistake," said cabby.

"A mistake?—I guess not. Here, sir. You've earned this," and he placed a bill in the driver's hands.

"You're not to wait, man," said Jarold. "I won't need your services any more."

The other went back to the reins and the vehicle rattled out of the vermin nest.

"I'm on the right track now," said the banker, once more dragging down his hat. "I will find him at home and then for the change."

He walked a few steps from the corner, crossed the street, and all at once

plunged down a flight of steps and knocked at a door.

As it was opened he darted inside and brought up in front of a man whose face was a curiosity.

It was a face that bore unmistakably the brand of crime.

There was the small, evil eye, the aquiline nose and the thin, criminal lip.

"I'm here at last," was all Jarold Jenks said to this individual, who held a lamp in his right hand.

"So I see."

"Now I want you to do your best work. I must be made another man before I quit this place."

The stranger put down the lamp and looked closely at the banker of Wall Street.

"I'll change you. I'll fix you up so your wife won't know you," he grinned. "You knew where to come, didn't you, Jarold Jenks? I don't ask any questions, but I've got only one thing to say."

"What's that?"

"From this hour your fate is in the hands of Ninepins."

The banker did not speak; he only bit his lip.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEAD BIRD IN THE NEST.

For some time the Train Spotter was carried through the streets of New York behind the cab which had taken the man seen in the Grand Central Depot.

He placed a good deal of reliance in his driver, and in time the man pulled up and leaned toward his fare.

"He's stopped, sir," said he.

Tracer opened the door.

Looking out he saw that the tracked cab had come to a standstill a short distance up the street and that the man he had followed was just getting out.

"Drive on and pass him," said Tom.

He shut the door again and was driven forward.

"Turn the first corner and stop," were the orders which the detective gave, and he was obeyed.

When he alighted he went back to the street where he had left his quarry and saw that he was gone.

The man had entered one of the houses in the immediate vicinity, but which one he did not know.

It was not the first time in his career that the Train Spotter had been served in a similar manner.

While he stood among the shadows of the buildings he saw a door open and a man came from one of the houses.

He was a person past sixty, but his dress was neat, almost nobby, and he carried a cane like an old sport.

On the step he lit a cigar and for a second showed the detective his face.

"Why, it's the General!" cried Tom. "It's the old man himself. I wonder what fetches him to this part of the city?"

Tripping lightly from the steps the party so closely watched by the Train Spotter came toward him twirling his cane in rare good humor.

Tracer looked at him till he reached him, when he threw out one hand and touched the man's arm.

The old sport stopped and looked at the detective.

"Well, well," exclaimed he. "I didn't expect to see you in this part of Gotham."

"Perhaps not, General," smiled Tom. "It's your stamping ground now, is it?"

"Yes, been here a month. Did you miss me in the park?"

"I didn't see you on the old bench the other night."

"I don't go there any more. It's all because of the woman in the case," and the General laughed.

"She troubles you yet, does she?"

"Yes, and will till one of us lies under the grass. But, come. Let me show you my nest."

"What sort of neighbors have you got?" queried the ferret.

"Really, I can't say. I don't pay much attention to them."

"But you see them at odd times, don't you?"

"Not much."

Tom walked toward the house which his friend had just left, and the other opened the door and ushered him inside.

They passed into a snug parlor, plainly furnished and rather a nice place.

"It's queer to see you here," said the old man. "I never expected to be stopped by you in this part of town."

"I came hither on business. I've been following one of your neighbors, General."

"Indeed. Which one?"

"That's what puzzles me. He's a good-looking man of medium height and well dressed. He wears a long black mustache which he seems to take care of—"

"It must be the chap across the street. Strange man, that."

"Across the street? Opposite this house, do you mean?"

"Exactly. I've seen him twice and that only for a moment as he stood on the steps. I call him Captain Sleek."

"A pretty good name, by the way, and seems to fit him very well. I came up here after him."

The old sport ran his hand through his white beard and looked over at the Train Spotter.

"I say, Tom, what's this case about my old friend Marks? He's vanished, they say."

"He's gone, General. By the way, he was a friend of yours?"

"He used to be, at least. We were friends before he struck it so rich in Wall Street, and after that we drifted apart socially until I guess I would have been ordered out of his office if I had ventured inside."

"Marks did get pretty stiff," remarked the Train Spotter. "It's singular, this disappearance. You've seen the papers, for it's been there. Went to Albany, or at least started for the capital on a moneyed mission, and vanished."

The old sport bowed.

"Ever had a case just like this before, Tom?" he asked.

"Not exactly. This case contains some features my others did not enjoy."

"I would think so. It's uncommon for a gold bug like Abel Marks to board a train in the Grand Central and never be heard of again."

"It's out of the ordinary," said the Train Spotter. "But Marks seems to have had a traveling companion."

"He did? The old rascal! So there's a woman in his case, eh?"

"You're wrong for once, General. In this case the banker's companion was a man."

"Then that man might solve the mystery, if he would."

"I don't know. It is certain that Marks never reached Albany. He stopped this side."

"And there's no clew for you, sharp as you are, Tom?" laughed the sport.

"It looks a little dark," remarked the detective. "But let's come back to your neighbor across the street."

"Why come back to him?"

"He seems to know the man who went off with Abel Marks."

"Oh, that's the why, is it? That's what brought you to this part of the city? You're on the scent, I see."

"Yes, that's why I'm here. What do you know about your neighbor?"

"But little, as I've said. He comes and goes only after dark. Never saw him in the daytime at all. He is a night-hawk and flies only after sundown. I call him Captain Sleek, as I've told you, and that's all the name he's got, I guess."

"Does he live alone?"

"I can't say about that. Once I saw another face at one of the front windows—a woman's face, I might almost say a girl's; but I saw it for a moment only."

"His wife, perhaps."

"Or his sister," laughed the General.

"It's all one just now," said the ferret. "I would like to know a little more

about this fellow, and as soon as possible."

"Does he know you followed him?"

"I think not."

"Then the introduction might be managed. You want to meet him?"

"Not exactly that," hastened to put in the detective. "I don't care to meet him face to face, for that would give my little scheme away if he is suspicious."

"I see. You want to see him in another light?"

"Now you have it, General."

The General went to one of the windows of the little parlor and pulled the curtain aside.

He seemed to press his face against the pane, and for some time he stood there like a statue.

"This way, Tom," he suddenly called, and the detective sprang up and came forward.

"There's your bird now," said the General.

The detective looked and saw a man on the steps of the house directly opposite.

In figure he was exactly like the person he had followed from the Grand Central in the cab, and for some time he watched him, saying nothing to the General.

"He's as neat as a pin," spoke the old sport at Tom Tracer's elbow.

"Yes, his plumage is fine, and he may be a fine bird."

"Will you go after him now? There he goes. Look at the window next to the door. There's the beauty of the nest!"

The detective's keen eyes had already made out the face between the parted curtains, but owing to the light he could not tell whether the owner was old or young.

Meantime Captain Sleek had stepped to the pavement and was putting on his right glove.

"The girl might give you some information," said the General.

"You are right. Let the fellow go. We'll try the bird left at home."

They watched the man out of sight and saw the face quit the window.

The curtains across the way came together and the two men in the General's house went back to the table.

"Do you think Abel Marks had any enemies?" asked the Train Spotter.

"He had, but they're dead."

"Fortune favored the banker of Wall Street, then?"

"Yes. But I haven't kept much track of Marks of late. I rarely saw him, and I don't do business with the firm. But I knew he was getting rich and—"

The old General was interrupted by a shriek which came from beyond the house, and he ran to the window.

It was heard again, and he turned upon the detective with a startled look.

"It's from across the way. The light's out in the house over there and the girl may be in trouble."

It did not take the detective half a second to reach the door, and the old sport followed him.

The lights in the house across the street were out, and the place looked dark and still.

Tom Tracer bounded up the steps and tried the knob.

But the door was shut and would not yield to his hands.

"Break it in!" cried the excited man at his heels.

Confident that the cries had come from beyond the stubborn door, the stalwart detective drew off a pace and then launched himself against it.

He would have broken in a door stronger than that one, and it yielded.

It fell in on broken hinges as the young ferret fell almost headlong into a hallway and then for a moment paused there.

"It's the room to the right," said the General.

Already the Train Spotter had seen the door and was there.

He caught the knob and wrenched the portal open, then leaped across the

threshold into a room dimly lighted by a single jet overhead.

Tom Tracer turned on more light and fell back from the scene that met his gaze.

The body of a woman lay on the floor at his feet, and he saw that she had fallen from a chair.

"This is the girl," said the old man, who had entered after him. "Don't you see what a pretty face she has and what small hands? I told you she was the bird of this nest."

Tom Tracer was on his knees beside the girl and his hand had touched her wrist.

"She's dead," he cried, looking up at his companion.

"I thought so from the first. But, see! she's still warm. The shriek was hers."

"I don't doubt that, but what killed her?"

"That's for you to guess."

Tracer carried the body to a sofa on one side of the room and laid it thereon.

"There's no mark of violence," said the General.

"Yes, there is. Look here," and the Train Spotter laid his finger on a drop of blood on the fair white neck.

The old sport looked and nodded, but he did not speak.

The detective's gaze wandered about the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPOTTER'S NOCTURNAL TRAIL.

"It was not Captain Sleek," said the General suddenly, as he laid his hand upon the detective's sleeve. "We didn't hear the cry till after he had gone."

"That is right, General. But he may have come back."

"Oh, he might have done that; he had time, I'll admit; but I don't think he did, because he seemed attached to her."

"From the observations you made from over the way?"

"That's it. I didn't see much of them, you understand, but from what I did see they seemed man and wife."

Tracer, who had gone over to the round table in the middle of the parlor, came back and stooped over the body on the sofa.

One of the pallid hands hung toward the floor, and he noticed that it was tightly clinched.

Lifting it, he tried to unclasp it, but it was something he could not do.

The General came to his assistance, and together they opened the dead hand.

Something dropped out of it to the floor and lay at the detective's feet.

That something was a bit of paper carefully folded and quite small.

"What was it?" eagerly asked the General, as the detective opened the find.

"Not much," was the sententious answer, as Tom Tracer put the paper into his pocket.

"This is something for the police," remarked the General. "It's a wonder no one else heard the cries."

"It's better as it is," said Tom. "You can remain here—"

"What, in this house with this girl?" cried the other, losing color as he recoiled. "I'd sooner go into the tomb at once. No, I can't do that."

"Not for my sake?" asked Tom. "I can't remain. I must go. It's important."

"Then go. I'll stay till the officers come. You'll find the patrolman just round the first corner to the left. It's Dan Connors, and he's a good one in cases of this sort."

"I know Connors."

With this the detective bolted off and the old General shut the door.

Perhaps the latter wondered why Tom did not come back with the policeman who bustled into the house and looked at the dead body on the sofa.

He might have wondered, too, what was on the paper found in the death clutch, and whether he would ever be allowed to inspect the paper by the Train Spotter.

Tom Tracer did not stop long with the

policeman, whom he startled on his beat with the story of the ghastly find in the house.

He kept on down town.

He did not stop till he reached the Grand Central Depot, and there within a few minutes he boarded a train and took a quiet seat in one corner of the smoker.

As the train rumbled through the city and across Harlem Bridge, the Train Spotter seemed to have fallen into a deep reverie, as if he was thinking out the puzzle of crime which had just confronted him.

Once and only once he pulled a bit of paper from an inner pocket and looked at it in the light of the coach's lamp.

Seemingly satisfied with the inspection, he put it away again and leaned back in the seat.

On, on went the train in its northward course, till at last the city's lights grew fewer and fewer and at last had been left behind altogether.

Then Tom Tracer came out of his reverie.

He leaned toward the glass and now and then pressed his face against it, for the night was dark and the stars few.

After a shrill whistle the train pulled up along a narrow platform, and the detective left his seat.

He had time to swing himself from the steps before the train moved on once more and left him stranded, as it were, in the darkness.

In front of the detective rose the outlines of a little depot, and he seemed to regard it in silence for a moment ere he moved away.

Back of the building ran a narrow path which meandered on to a suburban village nestling among some hills, and not far from the Hudson.

The houses were scattering, and here and there the detective saw a struggling light.

Woodsdale was not a metropolis, but a little place where all the trains did not stop, and the people had not the business push of their larger neighbors.

Tom Tracer reached this station when the stars indicated midnight.

The sound of his feet on the gravelly walk was the only one he heard, and he at last walked on the grass alongside.

He seemed to know where he was going, for he kept on almost to the end of the narrow walk.

Five minutes later he drew up in front of a house the surroundings of which were clothed in darkness and silence.

The Train Spotter advanced to the porch and stopped. He heard no sounds beyond the doors, and the windows were closely shuttered and the inner blinds drawn.

The detective would have leaped upon the porch if at that moment he had not heard a noise behind him.

He looked, but saw no one, for there were a number of cedar trees on the cramped lawn.

Some one was coming up the gravelled walk, some one whom he could not see.

Tom Tracer stepped back into the darker shadow of a tree and held his breath. Perhaps the tenant of the house was returning home.

Nearer and nearer came the person on the walk, and at last the Train Spotter made out a figure darker than the faint shadows thrown by the trees.

This person sprang upon the porch and unlocked the front door.

Beyond this door burned a hall light, and this gave the detective an opportunity to see a little of the person who had gone into the house.

If the detective of Gotham did not start at what he saw he certainly thought that he had not come to Woodsdale for nothing.

The man whom he had traced through the city by the cab stood before him!

The last man he and the old General had seen come out of the house where they subsequently found the dead girl had entered the house of the cedars and had shut and bolted the door behind him.

This discovery startled the cool detective, and perhaps at that moment he asked himself what all this had to do with the vanishment of Abel Marks, the Wall Street banker.

The house now seemed hermetically sealed against him, but Tom Tracer did not despair.

He went round and round the place. He looked at it from all sides and from eaves to foundation.

In the rear of the place was a small back building which he carefully inspected and at the door of which he stopped.

Suddenly the detective fell back, for footsteps came toward the door and then he heard some one say:

"It's bolted, I see."

"I told you so, but you wouldn't believe," said another voice in another part of the house.

The detective waited till he could hear no other noises and then he crept back to the same door.

"You came up without company, did you?" asked a voice in the house.

"Why shouldn't I? You don't suppose I would bring a policeman with me?"

"Of course not. I don't care about seeing them here. What's the latest in the city?"

"Nothing. I haven't inquired."

"They haven't found him yet?"

"No, and they don't seem to care much if they never find the old fellow."

A light laugh followed this and then stillness came.

This only served to whet the detective's appetite for something else.

He wanted to look beyond the door.

He had a curiosity to see what was going on in the house, and he resolved to see.

Near the door stood a box, and above it a little window curiously placed in the side of the house.

It was a little window of but four small panes and no sash.

Tracer, the detective, mounted the box and began to attack the window.

With his keen knife he removed the putty from the lower right-hand pane and took it out with the skill of the practiced burglar.

Beyond the window hung a thick curtain which he attacked with the point of his knife, slitting it so he could look beyond it.

Tom Tracer's movements were almost noiseless, and when he had ripped the curtain he pulled the rent open and used his eyes.

He looked into a room and upon a scene that satisfied him for his labors.

He looked down into a small parlor-like room which at the time was occupied by two men.

He saw first the handsome one called Captain Sleek by the "General," and the other a tall man of forty or thereabouts.

Was the tall one the person whom Shivers had seen with Abel Marks on the cars?

The fragrance of prime cigars was wafted to the detective as he gazed upon the scene around him, and he saw on the round table a bottle of champagne and egg-shell glasses.

"What does he say now?" asked the younger of the pair.

"What he has said all the time. He's obdurate yet, and he won't listen to anything now."

"Is he asleep?"

"He was awhile ago, for I looked in upon him."

"Bring him out. I want to talk to him."

"But you can't change his mind. It's impossible, and we've got to play the big, cool hand if we want to reap the harvest."

"Fetch him out anyhow. I'll see."

The tall man rose and unlocked a door to the right of the table.

The other suddenly threw his hands to his face, pulled off a heavy mustache that had adorned his upper lip, took from his pocket a little goatee which he fitted hastily to his chin, and leaned back in

the chair with his head elevated in grandiose style.

In a few moments the door opened again and the tall man emerged from the room.

But this time he was not alone, for there walked beside him a man at sight of whom the watchful ferret took a quick breath.

The moment the tenant of the bedroom saw the man at the table he stopped and appeared to shrink back, but the tall one hustled him and pushed him into a chair.

"Well, I've found Abel Marks anyhow," said the detective to himself.

For a moment the man who had changed his facial appearance leaned toward the banker and looked him over from head to foot.

"You're dead, Abel Marks," said he.

The Wall Street nabob gave him a strange, querulous look.

"You're as dead to the world as you ever will be!" he went on. "They've given you up for dead in the city, and your daughter has put on black."

"My God!" cried Marks. "It is not so terrible as all this? It cannot be."

"But it is. They've ceased to look for you. You've simply passed out of existence, and if you were in Greenwood, or buried in the East River, you wouldn't be more out of the world than you are now."

"But where am I?" cried the banker.

"Haven't I just told you? You're dead. But, come. Here's the paper that you must sign." And a legal-looking document was thrust under the banker's nose.

He looked at it a moment and then sprang up with a wild cry.

"Anything but that," he gasped. "I can't! I can't!"

"But you must," and he was thrown back into the armchair.

CHAPTER V.

THE RAILWAY TRAIL.

The position of the Train Spotter was a dangerous one, but he resolved to remain and see what was to follow in the room of the house behind the cedars.

He had not undertaken the night journey from New York for nothing; he had not followed needlessly the clew found in the dead girl's hand, and he was not the man to retrace his steps while there was something of importance to observe.

For a moment after the banker had been thrust back into the chair by the tall man he sat perfectly still, though with the whitest of faces.

He was in the power of the two rascals, and the Train Spotter wondered what would come of the play.

"You won't sign the papers, eh?" cried Captain Sleek. "You mean by your refusal that you don't intend to keep your word."

"I never promised to sign such documents. It would ruin me for life."

"That's your way of looking at it."

"But if I am 'dead,' as you say, what's the use of my signing anything?"

The men exchanged looks, and Captain Sleek leaned once more toward the missing nabob.

"That settles it," said he, suddenly rising and waving his hand toward the door. "Take him back, Sammy."

In another moment the hand of the tall man fell upon Marks' arm and the banker started to his feet.

"Back there!" he cried, with a shiver. "For God's sake, don't put me in that room again."

"It's your tomb till you come to your senses. It's to be your last place till then."

The banker held out his hand.

"Let me see the paper," said he.

"No; it's too late now," replied Captain Sleek. "I've made the offer and you refused. You can't see the paper now."

"Then hear me. You can kill Abel Marks; you can bury him alive in that room and seal it against the world; but you can't break my spirit."

Both men laughed, not boisterously but coolly, and the banker seemed to increase in stature as he listened.

"You played your hand out," he exclaimed, turning to the tall one. "I'll admit that it was a sleek game, just the kind men of your stamp would play. I was a fool to be decoyed out of the city by the story you coined. It was a well-played job, but there's a future, gentlemen. Not only this, but there's a day of retribution."

"It will be a long while coming," laughed the youngest of the pair.

"If it's one, five or ten years, it will come! Never mind," was the response, "you can't have your accursed secret kept forever. They may call Abel Marks dead. My daughter may live on believing that I went off a guilty man, but the time will come when the dark places will be made light and when the hand of vengeance will smite the guilty."

"Take him back, Sammy," cried the handsome man. "Don't let him preach his homilies here."

The banker of Wall Street was led back into the room from which he had been brought, and when he had been pushed across the threshold the portal was shut and "Sammy" turned back to his companion.

"You left her all O. K., did you?" said he, dropping his voice almost to a whisper.

"Yes. I left her in the nest, but not in the very best of humor. She's inclined to give us a little trouble."

"I feared it. Life's dull here. I can't afford to watch the old chap long."

"You don't have to watch him. The house is safe and there's no prying eyes about. You don't have any trouble here, eh?"

"No, haven't had any since I came up with him. It was a tame ride, for he thought he was going to make half a million, and I kept him in good humor till I got him beyond the door."

"Things are coming our way," smiled Captain Sleek. "I came up to see how you were coming on. Now, if the ferrets get after him they won't stop to look for him here."

"I don't see why they should. This is out of the world so far as publicity is concerned, and—"

"Wait! He's knocking at the door," and the speaker rose and crossed the room.

Tom Tracer watched him lean against the portal as he put his ear to it and listened.

"Let him knock. He means nothing, and wants to get out, perhaps to give us more of his gabble," said the taller one. "Don't let him break in upon our business any more to-night."

But Captain Sleek listened, and while he did so a smile stole over his face.

"Yes, yes," he said, speaking to the prisoner beyond the door, and then he came back to his companion.

"What did he want?" asked that person.

"He asked me if I would see his daughter when I went back to the city."

"Well, what else?"

"He wanted to know if his partner, Jarold Jenks, believes him dead, and I told him yes."

"That's right. Make him believe that he is dead to the world. That will break his spirit quicker than anything else, and we will get at the treasure sooner."

Captain Sleek sat down again and picked up a cigar, but all at once he threw it down and glanced at his watch.

"I must go back. The train just whistled."

"It is at the bend, where it stops to water. You've got plenty of time."

"Take good care of him, and at the first sign of discovery or danger spring the trap."

"I'll do that, never fear. I don't intend to be caught with any of the spoil in my hands."

"That's it. Now I'm off. You'll hear from me, to-morrow, or yet to-day, for it's past midnight."

Captain Sleek pulled his hat over his brow and bolted from the house.

The door locked itself behind him and the tall one sat alone in the arm-chair.

For a little while after the sudden departure Tom Tracer stood on the friendly box and listened to his feet on the gravelly walk, and at last lost the sounds.

Captain Sleek was gone, and now what should he do?

Should he storm the fort?

He was Sammy's equal; he had crossed arms with more than one man as tall as he and as strong.

The Express sent forth a shrill whistle as its headlight came into view, and at last it pulled up in front of the depot.

He could not see the man who swung himself upon the steps, but he heard the train move on again, and the headlight showed him for a second the suburbs of Woodsdale.

The Train Spotter went back to the house.

He looked once more into the room where he had witnessed the exciting scenes, and then at the door which kept Abel Marks, the missing banker, from the world beyond.

What was all this terrible plot against the nabob of Wall Street, and what was the prize for which these two men were striving?

And, then, there was the woman found dead in the house on the little avenue.

He thought of her as he recalled the clew which had brought him to Woodsdale, a bit of paper upon which some one had traced in a wriggling line the words:

"Abel Marks is in Woodsdale in the meshes of death."

These were the words which had carried him through the night to the suburban village.

They had sent him out upon this strange mission, and he had seen the missing banker.

Not only this, but he had obtained a clew to the tall man and he had tracked Captain Sleek from the scene of somebody's crime in the city to the village near the Hudson.

"Abel Marks is good for some days here," thought the detective. "I know where he is and I can lay my hands on him at any time. What I want to do now is to keep track of Captain Sleek. Will he go back to the New York nest, or will he avoid it?"

He could catch no other train that night, and he went back down the gravelly walk with the house behind him.

Once he looked back but saw no light in the house, and at last he stood at the edge of Woodsdale.

In the early morning there would be a train and it would take him to the city with lightning speed.

He would have to wait for this train, but before that another train from the city passing north would pull up before the platform.

Tom Tracer heard the whistle of this train and remained where he was on the platform shaded from the head-light by one end of the little depot.

It barely stopped, but in the shortest space of time a man swung himself from the steps and stood for a moment on the planks.

The hidden ferret saw this man, and for a moment he looked with wide-open eyes.

It was Captain Sleek!

"I see how he could do it," said he. "He could leave his train at a certain place and come back on this one. Is he going to play a hand against Sammy, or does he want to come back here to finish the prisoner of the plot?"

Captain Sleek, with the soft hat still over his brow, made off toward the house behind the cedars, and in a little while he had the Train Spotter at his heels.

Tom Tracer watched him with the eye of a hawk and saw him cautiously approach the house.

Everything was quiet there, and Captain Sleek slipped upon the porch and opened the front door.

"He means mischief," said the ferret to himself. "This cunning fox is back on dark business."

Beyond the house still reigned the silence of death, and the detective slipped around to the box and mounted it once more.

Once more he parted the rent in the curtain and looked into the room beyond.

There stood in the middle of the parlor a man whose face was now covered with a full beard, but the ferret knew the figure.

Captain Sleek was the only person visible, and he had altered his appearance for a purpose.

He did not turn on the light more than he found it, but walked to the table and shuffled a few papers there.

It was evident that he was looking for something that seemed to have eluded him, for he looked up disappointed and then at the door leading to the prisoner's room.

A dark scowl crossed his face and deepened the gleam in his eyes.

"I'll get it later on. I thought it still lay on the table, but I won't disturb Sammy for it," said he in audible tones, and the next moment he turned to the front door again.

Sammy, the tall man, had not heard him, neither had Abel Marks, for no sound came from the other rooms, and the ferret saw him slip from the house as noiselessly as he had come in.

"He will catch the early train now, and so will I," said the Train Spotter.

Tom Tracer made a hasty toilet in the first streaks of gray that lit up the east.

He waited till Captain Sleek was almost to the depot and then he slipped over to another gravelled street, down which he moved.

Already there were early passengers on the platform in the crisp, cool dawn, and the moment the train whistled he caught sight of Captain Sleek.

The Train Spotter entered the car in which the lights were still burning, and took a seat directly behind the quarry.

The train pulled out.

Captain Sleek, changed greatly by the false beard, leaned back in his seat and seemed to give himself up to reflections.

Apparently he was satisfied with what he had done that night, for once or twice he chuckled and drummed with his long white fingers on the polished sill of the window at his shoulder.

Behind him the man of many trails watched him furtively like a falcon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TUSSELE IN THE GRAY DAWN.

Though young, Captain Sleek had about him the look of the desperado.

His body was well made and agile, and he could throw out an arm which seemed mailed with a giant's powers.

With his broad-brimmed hat and his handkerchief about his throat, with the short, open jacket-like coat in which he made the trip to Woodsdale, he did not look much like a city gentleman, but, on the contrary, more resembled the keen-witted Westerner, ready to make or lose a fortune.

Tom Tracer, in the seat behind this man, wondered what desperate game he was playing with the coolness of the Turk, and he thought again of the dead girl found by him and the old General in the pretty parlor on the avenue.

For some time Captain Sleek did not stir, but lay against the back of the plush seat while the train rattled past suburban towns or stopped long enough to accommodate the early travelers to the great city.

As yet the Captain had not inspected the occupants of the coach he was in.

He had taken the seat immediately upon entering the car, and did not see the man behind him.

The train was nearing the outskirts of New York before it seemed to flash across Captain Sleek's mind that perhaps a slight inspection of the personnel of his fellow-travelers might reward him.

He turned his head and looked back.

At first he did not appear to see the detective, though for the last thirty minutes he could have touched him at any time.

He looked beyond Tom Tracer and saw a lady and the other passengers.

Not till then did he see the man-hunter.

Their eyes met as the detective raised his head, and for the shortest space of time they looked deep into each other's face.

In that look Captain Sleek seemed to realize all.

It seemed to rush across his brain that he had been followed.

Not only this, but the detective was within reach and perhaps ready to pounce upon him like the man-hawk that he was.

There are looks that speak, and Captain Sleek's glance was one of these.

His eye flashed up their baleful light, and he threw one hand toward his hip.

All in the twinkling of an eye was this movement and the warning look, and the man of trails understood it.

The quarry had seen his hunter.

Captain Sleek had discovered that the night trip to Woodsdale had had a spectator, and that the back journey had perhaps been watched to the minutest particular.

"Keep your seat," said the detective, looking into the other's eye. "Don't let my presence give you any uneasiness."

It was the match to the powder, the spark to the magazine, for the next instant Captain Sleek was on his feet.

There were passengers who saw the quick move, but did not hear the detective's words.

Several of these sprang up in alarm as the hand of Captain Sleek came from concealment and was seen to grasp a cocked revolver.

Tom Tracer, as quick as his quarry, was also on his feet and his hand went up against the one Captain Sleek threw forward.

They stood face to face, these two men, and the people who looked on either sprang up or sat still and held their breath in fear.

The right hand of the hunted man flew up and the revolver thrust forward brought screams of terror from a woman's throat behind the detective.

But the hand of the Train Spotter was too quick for the man.

Tom Tracer caught the wrist below the weapon and threw it down; at the same time he struck out from the shoulder and sent Captain Sleek nearly over the back of the seat before him.

But the blow, a glancing one, did not more than stagger the city sport, and he came back at the detective with an oath which rang through the car.

He met his match, however, in the person of the detective, for Tom Tracer once more rendered the revolver useless by a sweeping parry, and the following instant struck the bearded man a blow full in the face.

As Captain Sleek fell out of the seat the detective sprang after him, but with the quickness of a cat his adversary recovered and plunged down the aisle.

The train was rushing through a village where there was to be no stop, but the madman reached up and jerked the bell-rope, only pausing in his plunge long enough to do this.

At the door he turned and looked back at the detective.

There was vengeance in his eyes and another curse parted his lips.

He reached the platform, and some passengers threw up their windows, wondering if the fellow would have the courage to leap from the rattling train.

Would he dare death in a jump?

Tom Tracer, kept back for a moment by a hysterical woman who had fallen into the aisle, gained the open door in time to see the form of Captain Sleek swing from the steps and vanish as the coach swept by.

The detective leaned from the steps and looked back.

Among the tall grass which grew to the rails he saw nothing at first, and then he saw a hat roll from beneath the train.

"It swept him under," he cried, aghast. "The cool devil took the risk and won."

In another moment the train swung around a bend in the road and dashed through the little town, still asleep, unconscious of the thrilling scenes just enacted within its limits.

The detective went back to his seat.

The white-faced passengers flocked around him, but got little information for their pains.

They could speculate as to the cause of the startling encounter between the two men, for Tom did not betray himself, and at last the train ran into the Grand Central.

The Train Spotter had had an exciting night of it, and the moment he alighted he looked around for Shivers.

The depot detective always on duty, with the keenness of the lynx, spied the detective first and came up with an exclamation.

"Been watching you. I saw you go up the road—"

"Well, Shivers, boy, what's happened?"

The man drew the detective aside.

"It was last night, sir, and the queerest thing I ever heard. I was on duty when I saw Jarold Jenks, Abel Marks's partner, you know, come in here. He looked as white as a sheet and didn't know just what to do."

"But he did something?"

"Yes. He changed his mind."

"How so, Shivers?"

"He walked over to the ticket office, and then concluded he didn't want to go anywhere and left the depot."

"That was last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure he left the depot?"

"I am. I followed him out and saw him get into a cab, and the directions he gave the driver surprised me more than anything else."

"What were they?"

"He wanted to be driven to the darkest spot in the city—a spot absolutely dangerous during the daytime, but after night the shades of death! It's where we ran down the little Italian last summer; you recollect, Tom?"

The detective nodded.

"Did he want to be driven there, Shivers?"

"That's what he did, and I guess he got accommodated. I intended to ask Jerry when he came back, but he hasn't come back, so he must have got a good fare from the old man."

Tom Tracer seemed to stare into vacancy while the spy talked, and, when Shivers had finished he touched his arm:

"If Jerry comes this morning get it out of him, but in a crafty way," said the shadower.

"I will. But what about the missing man?"

"Nothing to report, Shivers," said the ferret, and in another second Tom Tracer was on the pavement.

From the Grand Central the detective made his way to police headquarters and opened a little door there.

Seated at a table, with his keen eyes watching as bright as ever, was the earliest man on duty, the indefatigable Inspector.

He greeted the Train Spotter with a cheery smile, and his glance invited the detective to take a chair.

"What have you discovered?" asked the Inspector.

"About the death of the girl on Madison avenue?"

The Inspector nodded.

"But little. I've been on another trail."

"Oh! Your coat is torn. You've had a tussle, I see."

"A little tussle on the train coming down."

"So you've been out of town?"

"Yes."

"All right. The girl was murdered. There is a stab wound in the neck, and, while the blade did not reach the heart, there are suspicions that it did its work in the blood."

"A poisoned blade?"

"Yes. The girl is one Diamond Dess. She has been living for some time with her brother, a young man named Carlo Mayne. He is a good all-round sport, but not of the kind that kill their sisters. It is a singular case, for a gentleman who rooms across the street says that he has never seen anything wrong with the pair. But there may be another woman in the case, for the puncture is so small that it suggests one of those tiny daggers which the Italians sometimes carry. I have turned the case over to Waters, not that we would not like to have you take it; but, as you have been looking up the vanishment of Abel Marks, the Wall Street banker, we did not like to disturb you while on that trail."

"What else have you done? Waters has searched the house, I suppose?"

"He has. He left here but ten minutes ago and in high glee. He believes he will reach the end of the trail in a short time. He hints at a conspiracy. The girl must have stood between another woman and a lover, but Waters will pull the mystery apart. Now, what news from the Marks matter?"

"It's pretty dark yet," said the detective.

"He cannot be traced beyond the city. There are a number of little towns between here and Albany, and at one of these he might have left the train while laboring under some spell. He was a strange man. His daughter admits this. Abel Marks seemingly was happy and contented. This is the third disappearance we have had to deal with within the last three months, and the termination of the other two have already rendered the people doubtful of the efficiency of the force."

Tom Tracer rose and looked into the Inspector's face.

"I am going to solve this mystery!" said he, speaking with determination.

"I'm glad of that, Tracer."

"I intend to bring to light that which is dark, and I may run across Waters's trail in doing so."

"Waters won't object, I'm sure," was the answer. "He is at work now, and he thinks he will land his quarry shortly."

The detective smiled and looked toward the door.

In another moment it opened and a police sergeant put his head into the Inspector's room.

"What is it, Logan?" asked that official.

"There's a boy out here who says he wants to see the Inspector."

"A boy, eh? Send him in. Don't go just yet. I want to say another word."

The door swung open once more, and in came a boy of fifteen, with a bright eye and dressed in ragged clothes.

He stopped short and looked from Tom Tracer to the Inspector and back again.

"Which is the boss?" he asked.

Tom pointed at the Inspector, and the boy went over to the desk.

"I want to tell you about Ninepins," he said. "It was last night. Ninepins is a boss. He changes people, makes new people, you know. I seed him at work last night. He made a new man out'n a man called Jarold Jenks—"

"That's Marks's partner," interrupted the Inspector.

CHAPTER VII.

CRAPSY TOSS'S SERVICES.

"Where does Ninepins live, boy?" asked the Train Spotter.

The boy looked at Tom, and a smile came to the corners of his dirty lips.

"Why don't you ask me dat, boss?" he queried, glancing at the Inspector.

"It's all the same. That gentleman has a right to ask that question."

The urchin hitched up his trousers and leaned upon the desk.

"Ninepins has a secret den in de worst part of de Tenderloin," was the answer. "Ninepins is a good one when it comes to changin' de people who get tired o' livin' in dere ole skin an'—"

"That's all right. We understand that. Could you show this gentleman where Ninepins lives?"

"Yas, but de trap's shut up now."

"Since when?"

"Since he did de job for Jarold Jenks last night."

"We don't care about that. We want to see where Ninepins lives," put in Tom Tracer. "Will you show me, Jimmy?"

"Hey, Jimmy! Dat's not my name. I'm Crapsy—Crapsy Toss. Won't I show you? Hit's all right, boss?"

"All right, Crapsy."

The boy turned and strode from the office, followed by Tracer, the ferret.

"You see," explained the boy, as they moved off. "I sometimes sleep in Ninepins's den, an' last night I had crept in for my snooze, when dat man woke me up. He came in like a thunderbolt, an' wanted Ninepins to 'tend to him at once. But hit wasn't jes' the changin' w'at s'prised me, cap'n."

"No, Crapsy?"

"Hit was w'at Ninepins said."

"What was that?"

"He told the man that from that moment his fate was in his hands. He said that he was under Ninepins's thumb from then on, and the man got white and said he was."

"You saw and heard all this in the house last night?"

"I did."

Crapsy Toss, talking nearly all the time, guided the detective into the dark plague spot of the city.

"There's no need of playing it fine, for we won't find Ninepins in," said he.

"We kin jes' take de front door, or, if you wish, I kin show you round to de back door and let you in dat way."

"The back door, Crapsy."

In a little while Tom Tracer stood in a low-ceiled room, barely eight by ten, with the walls darkened by smoke and foul odors in the place.

"Dis is Ninepin's den," said the boy, with a sweeping gesture. "Hit's not de best in de city, but hit was good enough for Ninepins till last night."

"Do you think he's changed quarters?"

"Why shouldn't he, after such a strike as that. Git a golden pigeon in your hands, like old Jenks, de Wall Street bloke, an' you kin sit down and pluck 'im all you want."

"I see, and you think that is Ninepins's idea of a fortune?"

"Dat's jes' what it is. De man didn't know I was on de other side o' dat wall last night, and he hasn't found it out yet."

Tom Tracer searched the place, which consisted of two small rooms below the level of the street, and just the place for a disreputable man like their late occupant.

The keen-eyed boy pointed out several places where little things had been moved, and the ferret followed him into the room where Ninepins slept.

"Dere's another place under this," said Crapsy Toss, "the cellar. The door's in the corner and—you've found it."

A ring in the floor, discovered by kicking a bit of carpet to one side, revealed a door, and the ferret lifted it.

A short flight of dark steps was seen, and the detective, looking sharply at the boy, asked:

"What's down here?"

"Cap'n Kidd's treasure, mebbe," was the reply, accompanied by a grin.

The Train Spotter descended, followed by the equally curious lad, and a match illumined the little place beneath the floor.

All at once Tom Tracer fell back, for there lay on the ground before him the half-bent figure of a man!

At the same time his match went out, but the boy had caught sight of the

form, and had recoiled, with an exclamation of terror.

"Bring the lamp down here, Crapsy," ordered the detective, and the nimble street Arab did so.

This lamp Tom held close to the figure on the ground.

"He's dead!" cried the boy.

"Dead drunk, perhaps," smiled the other, as he looked into the man's face.

"Hit's Ninepins's double. Hit's his shadder!" was the boy's exclamation.

"Has he a double?" queried Tom.

"What hain't he got?"

"But this man? You called him Ninepins's double. Is he Ninepins's brother?"

The pale boy shook his head.

By this time Tom had dragged the limp body to the lower steps.

What was then more fully revealed was a large, brutal face, but in the little eyes, now wide open, glittered beneath midnight brows an evil look.

Crapsy slipped behind the ferret, as if he did not care to have the fellow see him.

"Take the light up-stairs," and Crapsy darted up the steps before the man could recognize him.

Crapsy out of the way, the Train Spotter bent over the man and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"We're alone now," said he. "What were you doing, half senseless, on the floor, Ninepins?"

The man grinned, and then broke into a coarse laugh.

"They call me Ninepins, a good many of them do," said he, "but I'm not that person."

"Oh, come, you can't hoodwink me. I know Ninepins."

"There, don't call me that. I'm not to blame because nature made both of us in the same moulds. I'm Taspar Flinch, and you—see here, man, what's it worth?"

The little eyes had a curious look, and the man breathed hard.

"It's worth a good deal, perhaps, but you can't hoodwink me. Taspar Flinch, eh? That's pretty good, Ninepins."

The man's hands closed on the detective's arm.

"It's no fake," persisted he. "Don't call me Ninepins. Don't call me after the man who choked me last night because I happened to see a little operation."

"But, Ninepins, you're wanted by the police."

Instantly the man sprang up, and his stalwart figure seemed to rise a head above the ferret.

"I'm Taspar Flinch, as there's a star in heaven!" he cried, with uplifted hand.

"I'm no angel, I'll admit that, and I'll never sing the songs of paradise; but with my last breath I'll cling to the name my father gave me—Taspar Flinch!"

Tom, as if convinced, called out:

"We're coming up, boy;" and then he ordered the man to ascend.

"So Ninepins choked you?" he said, when Flinch had seated himself in a chair in the main den.

"Didn't he? And what's more, he thought he had finished me, too. My eyes were open last night, and that's why I felt his hands at my throat."

"Why didn't he use a knife?" asked the detective.

"He never will so long as his hands can do the same work," was the reply.

"You see, last night I came in upon him as he finished a job. He had just changed a man into another looking being. He had made him look like a different person, and a pretty good-looking person at that. But he failed to deceive me; that's what Ninepins did."

"You knew the man he made new, eh?"

"Didn't I? Ever been down on Wall Street and seen there old Jarold Jenks, the father of the young scapegoat who can break a bank in a jiffy?"

"I have seen him."

"Well, that's the man Ninepins used his arts on last night. I knew him, and pointed out a little defect in the make-up, telling Ninepins that a blind man would know Jarold Jenks on the

street. That roused Ninepins, and I was down on the floor in a little while. Jarold Jenks never left the operating chair, but looked on, with a fiendish grin, not caring if Ninepins did choke the life out of me. I'm pretty strong, but last night I was nothing in the hands of Ninepins.

"When I came back to my senses I was lying in darkness, and my face was covered with a cold sweat. Whenever I tried to rise my head whirled, and I relapsed into unconsciousness. Never was that way before in all my life, and I've taken it pretty rough since I left the cradle. It was swoon and counter-fit from that time till now, and for the first time since my terrible choking I feel myself again.

"Yes, it was Jarold Jenks that got changed last night in this room," continued Flinch. "He must have known about Ninepins's arts or he wouldn't have come down here—a man in his walk of life. He's tricky, the old gold bug is, and that boy of his is the greatest young rascal of the day. I didn't see the final finishing of the job, but I don't believe Ninepins changed it much, for he went off thinking that he had left me dead in the cellar. Now let me tell you what he made out of Jarold Jenks."

Taspar took a long breath and then proceeded.

"He cut his hair and dyed it. You remember that he could brush it over his ears, and that it was pretty gray. It was as black as a raven's wing when I saw it last night. Then he robbed the long face of the old banker of the beard, which everybody on Wall Street knew, and painted over the left eye a scar, with some of his indelible paint, so natural that none but a doctor with his knife could detect it. On the table where he was operating lay a pair of green goggles, and Jenks had just tried them on when I came in and got it in the neck."

"It was a startling change," remarked the listening ferret, with a smile.

"Why, sir, old Jenks could ride a hundred miles alongside that swell blade of his, and 'Prince Bullion' wouldn't take him for his father! It actually startled me, but I had to point out the one defect in the make-up, and then I had Ninepins at my throat.

"I've told you who I am," added Taspar. "Now be as kind and tell me something about yourself."

Tom leaned toward the man and gently touched his arm.

"You won't give me away?"

"I never betray a friend! My only fault now is that I am called Ninepins's double, but that's really not my fault. Curse nature for that blunder."

The detective heard at this juncture a noise on the outside of the den and a pair of glistening little eyes looked in at the door.

It was Crapsy Toss.

"Take the boy away!" cried Flinch. "He looks like one of Satan's imps! And, by the way, didn't he bring you here?"

"He did."

"To let you help me, and to pump me, too? You're a spotter, aren't you?"

Tom Tracer nodded, and the hands of the big man were clenched.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FERRET'S TRAP AND WHAT IT CAUGHT.

The afternoon of the day we are dealing with was well advanced when a young man, stalwart of figure and handsome, might have been seen approaching the house on M. avenue, opposite the General's quarters.

Perhaps, if he had known the reception awaiting him in the house of the midnight crime, he might not have ran up the steps with the agility he displayed, but certainly he did not imagine what was in store for him.

The trap had been set for hours, and the manacles were waiting for their prey.

As the young man entered the house he seemed to scent danger, for he

stopped in the hall and shot a swift glance at the door to the right of the main corridor.

A deathlike quiet pervaded the place, and in this he appeared to suspect peril.

But suddenly he sprang to the door, wrenched the knob, and dashed into the room.

"Dess?" he called, and then fell back to the door, for he confronted a man who stepped out from the shadows near the closed windows and covered him with a revolver.

It was Waters, the detective!

"You've been caught!" said the ferret, with a flash of pride in his eyes. "Don't give me any trouble, Carlo Mayne."

The man's face grew calm again.

"You seem to know me," said he.

"That's my business," answered Waters, a little haughtily. "You know who I am."

"An officer, I suspect; but I don't know why you should want me. Where's Dess?"

"She's dead."

"Dead? No! Why, last night—"

"She was murdered last night—"

"Murdered?"

The word died on the young man's lips, and he gazed at the detective like a man in a maze.

"Who—killed—her?" he gasped at last.

"You might answer, instead of asking that question."

"I?"

"You, Carlo Mayne. I will have to hold you, and in another place and at another time you will answer the charge of murder."

The man who stood before the revolver of Waters did not know what to do nor how to act, but he finally spoke:

"You must tell me about this," he said. "I deny that her blood is on my hands. You men make mistakes sometimes; you're not infallible."

The detective seemed to sneer.

"You don't deny that you knew Dess lived here?" he said.

"Heavens, no! I don't deny anything of the kind. She came here at my suggestion. Dess is my sister."

"Come; that won't do, Carlo Mayne. We already know better than that. Don't think that we have played out our hand blindly and merely set a trap for you. Diamond Dess is not your sister."

The young man raised his right hand, but it dropped to his side without speech.

"That's better. Don't try to seal a false statement with a false oath," said the detective. "She was found on the floor last night by one who knows that you lived in this house."

"Name him."

"The old gentleman across the way—the person nicknamed the General."

"I remember. Well, how was the deed done?"

"With this dagger, found under one of the carpeted steps of the stair out there."

The young man held out his hand for the knife which the detective had produced, but it was withdrawn.

"I never owned a dagger like that," said Carlo.

"That is for the courts to determine."

"Then the sooner the better," and he held out his hands. "Look you, detective. There will come a time of revenge, and the hands you shackle now will strike."

Waters put up his revolver and advanced toward the outstretched hands, but all at once the form of the youth left the floor, and the startled detective was pinned against the wall.

"For a penny I'd kill you where I hold you!" was the cry he heard. "I have you at my mercy. Where is she?"

"The body has been turned over to the police."

"And cut up by the surgeons?"

"I—I can't say."

"It's all your fault. You found her, did you?"

"I did not."

"Who did?"

"Tom Tracer."

The other uttered a wild cry at mention of the Train Spotter's name, and for a second his grip seemed to loosen at the detective's throat.

"Did he come here with the General?" asked Carlo.

"Yes."

"Did he find the dagger under the carpet?"

"No."

"Who found it there?"

"I did."

"Who put it there?"

"I don't know, unless you—"

"Liar!" almost shrieked the young man. "I never owned the accursed blade. Did it find Dess's heart?"

"No, it's a poisoned dagger, the doctors say."

"And you set this trap for me?" he laughed. "How long have you been here?"

"Ever since morning," confessed the detective.

"Waiting for some one to come into the trap?"

"The person for whom I waited was you."

"Oh, I am the murderer in your eye, am I? I am the person who took Dess's life with a poisoned dagger?"

"The trail led to you."

"Because I domiciled the girl here—because I visited her, because there was no other victim wanted by you but myself. Confess, for I am going to hold you against this wall till I have finished you. I come of a race of giants. I have already had adventures that would startle you. I had one last night. Ha! It was a risky one, but I came out of it with a whole skin, to be trapped by you in my own house!"

The young man laughed at his own words, and the detective, who was crushed against the wall with a pair of hands at his throat, looked into the merciless eyes.

"I don't know," said Carlo Mayne, softening a little in tone. "I don't know that you're so much to blame. You had to make a record to keep up your old one, for I've heard of you before now. But I can't afford to be dogged from this place."

Waters felt what was coming, but he could not avoid it.

The fingers of Carlo Mayne—long and slender ones they were—suddenly got a new hold on his windpipe, and then they began to close with the mercilessness of death itself.

There was no breaking loose from their infernal clutch.

He gasped in a little while, and at last did not gasp at all, for he had slid to the floor and lay like one dead at the feet of the accused.

There were countless noises in the detective's head when he came out of the valley of darkness and his first steps were tottering ones.

The room was a little darker, but he could see that he was the only tenant, and that Carlo Mayne was gone.

It is not worth while to chronicle Waters's thoughts as he moved across the room, exasperated and chagrined.

He had broken his record for good luck.

The quarry, trapped with so much patience and skill, had vanished, and he was the victim, not the victor.

Waters lost but little time getting out of that house.

The dagger which he had found concealed underneath the stair was gone, another proof that he had faced the murderer of Diamond Dess, and nothing but a sore neck and a lot of painful muscles told him that he had failed for once.

The chagrined detective stopped long enough on the scene of his discomfiture to record a vow to the effect that he would not stop till he had paid Carlo Mayne back and avenged the death of the girl.

The man could not escape him; he might fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, but he would have Clarence Water on his trail, and eventually he would

have to stand before the bar of justice and hear the sentence of doom.

Waters's first objective point after quitting the house was the little room where the body of the girl lay.

He was recognized by the official in charge, and his arm was eagerly clutched.

"You should have been here five minutes sooner!" cried that individual.

"What, was he here?" exclaimed Waters.

"Yes; if you mean the young man with the full beard."

"But he hasn't a full beard."

"The one just here had," was the reply. "He stood over there by the girl some time. He stooped and looked at the little wound in the neck, and even seemed to measure it."

"Was he cool?"

"As cool as one can be in the presence of death."

"How long did he stay?"

"Five minutes. I wanted you here, but you couldn't be found, so I had to let him go."

"That was the man!"

The little official fell back a pace.

"You don't mean that he was the murderer?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Great heavens! What a chance I had. Why, his back was turned to me half the time, and I could have covered him with a revolver and taken him in."

"Never mind. It's only a question of a few hours' freedom with him anyhow."

Waters stood in the open air with strange thoughts.

He was but five minutes behind the assassin.

He had even stood face to face with him and had felt his grasp at his throat; he had looked into the deep, scintillating eyes, and had heard his voice, a peculiar one, which he would easily recognize if heard again.

He did not go to the Inspector with his report; he was too chagrined for that. He wondered what Tom Tracer would say when he heard of the trap and the escape; he would never let his rival know of his failure.

The day waned and Waters saw the shadows of night fall across street and pavement.

He had gone home to nurse his failure and to plan for the future.

It was seven o'clock when a man stopped suddenly on Broadway underneath the electric lights and looked back at a pedestrian who had just passed.

He watched this individual a few moments and then followed him.

In a little while he caught up with him, and all at once laid a soft hand on his arm.

There was a quick start, but no cry on the arrested one's part, and the other said quietly:

"Can I see you a little while, Mr. Jenks?"

From beneath the arching brows of the young man thus stopped, for he was young and faultlessly dressed, there came a sudden flash of resentment, but the other chased it away in an instant.

"It's about a matter that concerns you—a matter of life, death and fortune."

"Three things that form a strange trio," was the laughing rejoinder. "I'll see you. This way. My rooms are within half a square from here," and with these words Blair Jenks, or "Prince Bullion," escorted Tom Tracer, the Train Spotter, away.

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCE BULLION AND THE DETECTIVE.

"I room here," said the son of the Wall Street banker, as he ushered the Train Spotter into a well furnished apartment just off Broadway and motioned him to a chair. "This is 'my nest,' as I call it. It is quite a neat place for a young bachelor like myself and my tastes are not hard to satisfy."

Tom Tracer looked round the room, and saw here and there little evidences of wealth and good breeding.

So this young man was Prince Bullion; he was the only child of a man toward whom his trail seemed to be leading, and after his interview with Taspar Flinch, the person found in a state of semi-consciousness in Ninepins's cellar, he was anxious to know a little more of young Jenks.

Having spoken about his room, Blair turned suddenly upon the detective, and said:

"You said you wanted to see me on a matter of business and you now find me at your service."

He crossed his legs in an easy, off-hand manner, and seemed to wait for Tom to proceed.

"You are aware, I suppose, that Mr. Marks, your father's partner, is missing?"

"That is the talk of the town," answered Blair. "Indeed, you find it discussed everywhere since it got into the papers, but really I don't see anything so strange about it."

"No? And why not?"

"There are not many people who knew Abel Marks. Being my father's business partner, I happened to see a good deal of the man, and to me his vanishment is not so remarkable."

"You think, then, that he went away and will turn up all right in the course of time?"

"I don't see why he shouldn't."

"But you know, perhaps, that he was to transact business of importance in Albany."

"I know that, and that is one of the reasons that causes me to look for his return."

"Why so?"

"I happen to know a little something of the nature of that particular business. Abel Marks was a man with few confidants, and he seldom told his secrets to my father, but this was one that leaked out despite his caution."

"That is good," said the Train Spotter, who had watched the young man closely while he spoke. "I should tell you, perhaps, Mr. Jenks, that I am a detective."

"I thought so from the first, was the reply, accompanied by a faint smile. "I happen to know that the matter has fallen into the hands of the police, and that men of your profession are 'on the scent,' as you call it. That is what I have heard, and the vanishment of Abel Marks so grieves his daughter, I understand, that she is willing to offer a large reward for information concerning him. I trust she will not, however, for if she will only wait her father will turn up all right, and that before long."

"You might reassure the girl if you would, Mr. Jenks."

Blair started a little, but did not reply. "Since you have just intimated that the business affair which called the missing man from the city was not unknown to you, would you object to telling it?"

"I don't know that that would be hardly the proper thing," was the quick answer. "You see, I happened to discover it; it was an accident, and I am not at liberty to disclose it."

The detective noticed a little twitch at the speaker's lips and in another moment Blair Jenks had left his chair and was crossing the room.

"By the way," said Tom Tracer, still regarding him like a hawk. "You've heard of the murder on M— avenue?"

Prince Bullion stopped, and a tremor swept his elegant figure.

"The—murder, did you say?"

"Yes; the killing of the girl known as Diamond Dess."

"I haven't heard," was the answer. "But this, I trust, has nothing to do with the disappearance of Abel Marks."

"Nothing. I happened to recall the murder, that's all. You know, Mr. Jenks, we are constantly thinking in the line of our work."

"Just so, and it's the most natural thing in the world for you to do so. What did you say the unfortunate creature's name was—Diamond something?"

"Diamond Dess."

"A professional name, isn't it?"

"Perhaps it is."

"A girl, too?"

"Yes; a young girl whose lines never fell in pleasant places, but not an out-cast, from what I have learned."

"Oh, you've investigated that, too, have you?"

Blair Jenks was looking into the face of the ferret with a breadth of flowered carpet between them.

"I have seen the girl and the place where the crime was committed."

For half a minute Blair Jenks continued his glare of astonishment, and then he threw himself into a chair at the table half way across the chamber.

"It's something for you ferrets," said he, looking across the cloth at his companion. "I mean that it is of more import than the vanishment of Abel Marks."

"I have nothing to do with the crime on M— avenue. I am on the other matter."

"I thought so, and if I can give you any information destined to throw light upon it, I will do so."

"But you have just refused to do so."

"How so?"

"You have admitted, Mr. Jenks, that you know something about the business secret which called Abel Marks from New York, but at the same time you refuse to disclose it."

"Pardon me. I am quite sure Marks would not like my disclosures. You must know, detective as you confess yourself to be, that there are skeleton closets in every large city."

"And thousands in New York?"

"Exactly. I do not say that the one in Abel Mark's closet is a dark one, but it is there all the same, but if you give the man time he'll get rid of it and come back."

"Go and assure his child that; go and tell the police, and let them give up looking for him."

"I can't say that it's my duty," smiled the youth, twirling his mustache, carefully waxed at the ends. "My father knows nothing of his partner's eccentricities; he never inquired into Abel Marks's business, but lets his secrets severely alone. But there's the murder on M— street. That affords more real work for a man like you than the vanishing of an old man who is all right somewhere and who will come back to his desk if you only give him time."

Blair Jenks looked at the window, and for a little while seemed to study the lace curtains.

He was a cool puzzle to Tom Tracer.

The more the detective watched him the deeper grew the puzzle, and at last he said:

"Do you know a man named Ninepins, Mr. Jenks?"

There was a quick, unmistakable start on the listener's part, and a little whiteness came to the thin lips.

"What's the name?" he asked, as he caught his breath.

"Ninepins."

"Queer name that; must be a nickname of some kind. There are so many nowadays."

"This is a nickname. I am quite sure of it. You don't know such a person."

"I never had that pleasure, if such it would be, to know the gentleman."

"I merely asked, as you are on the street much of your time, and are liable to run across all sorts and conditions of men."

"That's well put, Mr. Tracer. I am liable to see the riffraff and the elite, but not on an equal footing. I'm a gay blade, that's what they call me, and I have reaped more than one harvest of wild oats; but I never in the sowing or reaping met this Mr. Ninepins."

"Your father seems to know the man."

"Then I'll ask the governor the next time we meet what sort of a man he is."

"You might obtain some information there," answered the detective, and the other one looked away, and seemed to get a singular gleam in his eyes.

"Where did father first meet him—in the office on Wall Street?" suddenly asked Prince Bullion.

"I can't say as to that. But he met him not long ago and had him perform a little work for him."

"I don't know Ninepins, and if father does it is probably in a way pertaining to business. Shall I ask him, and report, Mr. Tracer? Nothing will give me more pleasure than to oblige you. Don't know much about the detective profession—wouldn't like it, I'm thinking—still, there's something in a mystery that's taking."

Once more the sleek hands twisted the mustache, and Blair Jenks stood erect.

"You'll find me here when you care to call," said he, looking at the Train Spotter. "I'm generally in, for of late I've been lazy and father hasn't given me many commissions."

"You transact business for the house, do you?"

"At times."

"How about the mine investment?"

Prince Bullion seemed to lift himself from the floor and the following moment he was close to the detective.

"The mine?" he echoed. "What mine, please?"

"Why, the one you were going to take stock in. You remember the miners from the West—the men who want to sell you the mine in the Gold Run district?"

"I recall them now, but the deal's off."

Blair waved his hand in a gesture of nonchalance and smiled.

"It's astonishing what little things you men pick up," said he. "That was a lame deal if I had made it. A good angel whispered in my ear, and drew me back from the brink."

"That was very wise, Mr. Jenks. Now let me bid you good-night."

Prince Bullion conducted his visitor to the front door and dismissed him there.

"In the name of Heaven, what does that man mean?" he cried, as he turned back to the room with a white face. "Is he on the trail, as he said, or is he only toying with me for a purpose?"

He sat down but for a moment, for all at once he sprang up and pressed an electric button.

There came a patter of feet on the stairs, and the door opened to show a human face.

"Here, Simon, go out and find me a newspaper. Pick up any one you can get hold of. I haven't seen one to-day."

The boy vanished, and the man, left in the room, turned once more to the table.

"Ninepins came into the game to-day, did he?" said Blair. "That man saw father last night. What for? He does but one thing, and father must have gone to him professionally."

By this time the boy was back with a newspaper which he laid on the cloth and went away.

"It's ten chances to one that I don't get anything out of the paper," remarked Prince Bullion, as he settled back in his chair. "I'll look, at a venture, though."

He ran his eyes up and down the columns, but did not see anything which startled him, till he was about to throw the sheet aside.

Then he read as follows:

"DISTRESSING ACCIDENT."

"Last night, about half-past twelve, a man was accidentally thrown under the wheel of a car on Fulton Street and terribly crushed. There was nothing about him to settle his identity. It is supposed that he lately went through the hands of a tonsorial artist, for his hair, which was gray, had been dyed, and his face cleanly shaved. Over one eye there was an artificial scar, discovered only by the strictest scrutiny by the surgeons. He is a man past sixty, and was dressed in dark clothes, not very new. He carried a pair of new green goggles in his inner coat pocket, and very little money on his person. He lies unconscious in the

accident ward of the hospital, and very few hopes are entertained of his recovery."

Blair Jenks, the young blade, threw the paper down and sprang up.

"That's the governor, for a hundred," he cried. "I know now why he went to Ninepins last night."

In another minute the room was deserted, for the youth was on the street.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN OF DEATH.

Tom Tracer had not forgotten his adventure on the cars with the man known as Captain Sleek.

The last he saw of this individual was his whirling form as he threw himself from the car platform, and he wondered if the wheels had really ground him to pieces.

He thought of the house in Woodsdale, and the scenes he had witnessed there, and when he walked from Blair Jenks's quarters near Broadway these things came back fresh to his mind.

The Train Spotter did not betray his secrets or emotion to any one, but felt that he had scored a hit in his brief interview with the banker's son.

He went from the house to another residence in another part of the city, and rang a bell.

The servant who ushered him into a room told him that "Miss Nora" would soon come, and he sat down to wait.

Presently light footsteps announced the approach of some one, and in another instant the door opened and a fair, but sad-faced girl, stood before him.

This, he knew, was Nora Marks, the banker's daughter, and he noticed that her lips were as white as her oval face.

It was their first meeting, and the detective rose as she came forward.

"You are the detective," cried the young creature, clasping her hands in an ecstasy of hope. "Mr. Flint told me about you, and he said that you would look into the mystery of father's absence. I wish to tell you now, Mr. Tracer, that you need not do so."

The ferret started slightly, and gave Nora a sharp look.

"Then you must have news from him," he said.

"I have, I am glad to say. I have had a letter from him, or at least a note which indicates that we have been unduly frightened."

Her words did not tally with her white and frightened look when she entered the room, and the detective waited for her to proceed and explain.

"It came to-day," she went on. "The mails brought it, and I will let you see for yourself."

She went to the table and picked a letter from a little basket there.

"It is merely just that you should see this," she went on. "It is but a scrawl which would indicate that father wrote it in a hurry or perhaps while a little unwell."

Tracer reached out and took the letter, but first glanced at the envelope that enclosed it.

He saw that the postmark was quite dim, if not altogether undecipherable, but this only whetted his appetite for more.

He drew the letter forth and opened it. Indeed it was brief and a mere scrawl.

It was unlike the writing of a business man, and the more the keen detective studied it the more he became convinced that he held in his hand a delusion and a snare.

The girl watched him narrowly, and when he looked up he caught her eye.

"That simplifies matters, doesn't it?" she asked.

"It would seem so."

"I thought so from the first, and waited to show it to Frank in order to let him see you and communicate the news."

Once more the ferret's gaze wandered to the letter, and once more he read it.

It merely informed Nora that her

father was well, and would be at home in a few days, or after he had transacted the important business that had called him from the city.

"Have you any of your father's writing, miss?" asked the ferret.

"There is some in the library."

She led the way to the high-ceiled room where the banker transacted his private business when at home, and unlocked the old-fashioned mahogany desk.

Putting in her hand she drew out a lot of papers, which she handed to the detective, who took them, and sat down.

"You can have the room to yourself for some time," said she, and stepping from the library, she left the man of trails to himself.

Tracer went to work at once.

He laid the message and the pages side by side, and scrutinized them carefully.

The deception was plain enough, though the imitation was not a bad one, and by the time he heard steps behind him he was through.

Nora Marks stood looking over his shoulder, and her face was now seamed with satisfaction.

"Isn't this a nice way out of the vexation?" said the girl. "I will sleep now."

"You have worried a great deal over your father's absence, haven't you, miss?"

"More than the outside world will ever know. There seemed something dark about it, but business is business with men of his stamp, and I shall forgive him the sudden vanishment when he returns and explains all."

Tom Tracer rose and replaced the papers in the desk, but the letter he kept.

Nora divined his intentions, for she said, quickly:

"You may keep that. I have committed the wording of the brief letter and can tell Mr. Flint all when he comes."

"I will keep it," was the reply, and she saw the letter folded and placed in the ferret's pocket to recall the circumstance later on. "I may want to use your father's letter."

Tom Tracer seemed to breathe strangely when he found himself on the sidewalk a few moments after this interview, and in a little time he was home once more.

The room where he lodged was small and neat.

It was the typical apartment of a bachelor of means, and withal was one of the cosiest places in the city.

The day had waned and once more the murky shadows of coming night stretched themselves on the pavement.

The day had been a busy one for the detective, and he had let no grass grow under his feet.

He could look from his window upon a street still crowded and see the tide of humanity which ebbed and flowed all day and far into the night.

He brought out the letter and studied it again.

Once more his keen eyes went over the scrawl, and when he folded it he smiled, the smile lingering at his lips half a minute.

Tom Tracer seemed to have found another clew to the mystery of the banker's vanishment.

He looked up and pushed back his chair.

That moment steps came to his door and the knob turned.

It was a door he seldom kept locked, save when he occupied the little couch behind the curtain at one end of the room.

The detective heard the steps stop as the knob turned, and when the door opened he saw the man who stepped into the room.

Men of Tom Tracer's kind are quick and always on the alert.

They learn by experience the value of skill and rapidity, and in the school of detectivism they find many opportunities for exercising their talents.

But this time the man at the door was quicker than Tom Tracer.

The tall, well-dressed figure with a swinging motion entered the room and stopped just beyond the threshold.

At the same time a revolver leaped to a level with the dark face, half masked, and the ferret could look into the muzzle without drooping a lash.

It was well done, and in the twinkling of an eye.

As the newcomer braced himself, Tom Tracer thought of the incident in the car and recalled his tussle with Captain Sleek, the agile Ajax, who had slipped through his fingers.

"Don't get up, Mr. Tracer," said the Unknown, as he eyed the detective coolly.

Tom sat still.

"It's a matter of business," continued the man near the door, which a sweep of his hand had shut. "It is a matter of very important business, I say, and you can meet it sitting as well as standing."

The detective saw the lips tremble with the words beneath the fringe of the black mask.

"You have pens and ink before you," said the stranger. "That is good. You have no objection to writing a little letter, I presume?"

Tracer did not speak.

"You'll please me, won't you? By the way, it's the best thing for you to do just now."

"What do you want done?"

"I want a letter written. I want a letter written to a friend of mine."

It was an odd request, and the detective acknowledged it with a little smile.

"It's not hard to do, Tom Tracer. You're a keen one, and you don't want to lose the bird almost within your hand. Therefore, you will now proceed."

The revolver did not drop a hair's breadth, nor did the eyes of the stranger get a softer gleam.

"This way," said he. "Date your letter 'New York, June 10th.' There, you've done that, eh? Very well. You will say: 'Dear Sammy—I will see you and the old gentleman to-morrow. Met with a little accident coming down to the city last night. Fell from the car and sprained my right wrist—'"

Tom Tracer stopped and looked up at the man.

He seemed to see everything now.

This was the cool head who had leaped from the train on the back journey from Woodsdale and the house among the cedars, and in all his experience he had never seen so cool an act.

"What's the matter?" queried the stranger.

"So you're the man?" cried the ferret.

"What man, Mr. Tracer?"

"Captain Sleek—my fellow-passenger on the train."

"Never mind that. It was only a little incident; nothing more. You know me. Very well. Behold me," and with one sweep of the hand the man pulled off the mask, showing him the handsome face of the person he had seen throw himself from the express.

They faced one another for a moment, and then the finger of the man near the door pointed at the half-finished letter.

"Proceed," he went on. "We can talk about this matter later on."

"We'll talk about it now or never!" said the detective.

The haughty head of the stranger seemed to toss imperiously, and the revolver, which had dropped a mite, rose again.

"It is the writing of the letter or death," said he.

Tom Tracer did not take up the pen, but looked across the table at his visitor.

"I am the man who jumped from the train, and it was a risky jump, but Satan protects his own. Ha! ha! I alighted in a lot of weeds, and on my feet, like a cat. You were on the hunt last night. You were up at Woodsdale."

"You are right. I was up there."

"And you solved the mystery of the old gold-bug's vanishment. I told Sammy you would get there if let alone. But go to work again. Where did we leave

off? Let me see. Please read what you've written."

Tom Tracer's eyes went back to the letter and rested there. He knew that other eyes were riveted upon him, and that he was watched by one of the most merciless of men.

"What! You won't do it?" cried the other. "Very well. I don't care."

The last words seemed to be spoken through clinched teeth, and the eyes darkened.

"You needn't write any more. I am going to end the letter myself, and with a startling postscript."

Tom Tracer knew what that meant.

He was to be shot down like a dog in his chair.

The man called Captain Sleek, the cool head whom he had tracked almost to the city, was on the eve of touching the deadly trigger and putting an end to his career.

"This is the last trail of your life, Tom Tracer. You can't beat us this time. There's too much at stake."

The detective, in a flash of time, measured the distance between him and the man near the door.

He had covered more space than that before in one agile bound.

Could he do it again?

The query barely formed in his brain when there came a puff of smoke, but no report, from the revolver, and the figure of the Train Spotter plunged across the table.

CHAPTER XI.

NINEPINS TO THE FRONT AGAIN.

The big and burly, brutal-faced man who stood within half a dozen squares of Tom Tracer's little office watching the surging crowds under the lights was Ninepins.

His broad shoulders betokened the strength for which he was famous, and his moving eye seemed to see everything which came within its scope.

He was not trying to secrete himself, for he stood against a building in an easy, off-hand way, where many saw him and inwardly wished for his figure and powers.

Like a spider watching for a fly stood Ninepins watching the people, old and young, who passed and repassed his station.

None so old as to escape his scrutiny; none too young to get past him without a look.

What was this man watching for under the lights of Broadway, and from a spot where he could look down into the narrow heart of Wall Street?

What had brought him to this spot, where thousands surged like a human sea, and jostled him, drawing from him now and then a frown, but, for the most part, a laugh?

He kept his post for an hour, and at last he crossed the street and dodged into the gold avenue.

Ninepins in Wall Street was a different-looking person from the Shylocks of the daylight.

There was nothing very suspicious about the man, only his big face and deep-set eyes.

His hands he kept out of sight, and as he shrugged along the pave with his wits on the alert, he looked about him, but now no one jostled him.

Broadway is not Wall Street after dark.

At last Ninepins came to a door set in a little vestibule, and into the space he darted.

It did not look large enough to conceal his figure, but it did so fairly well.

Ninepins stood at the entrance of one of those moneyed institutions which cease business in the afternoon and rest for the day.

The curtains, pulled down almost to the inner sills of the front windows bore the firm name of "Marks & Jenks, Private Bankers," and it was into the door of this house that Ninepins coolly fitted a key.

He swung the portal back with the

cleverness of one used to entering banks and closed it carefully behind him.

He found the inner door locked, but mastered it without trouble, and stood in the little banking house known all over the city, but of late a mark for the curious, for it had been closed for twenty-four hours, and neither of the partners had shown up.

Ninepins slipped to the curtains, and lowered them below the sill; then he turned on the gas till it showed him the room, which was at his mercy.

He was quite alone in the place.

"There's nothing like it," said he, with a chuckle, as he looked round the room. "I wouldn't fit in here, but I can't help that. I wasn't cut out for a nabob, but there's no telling what a man can acquire."

He laughed at the end of his sentence, and sat down.

"I just fill it, though I'm a little larger than the old man. I would make a fine banker, but—"

He cut short his own sentence, and crossed the room toward a steel safe which filled one whole corner.

It was one of the queerest safes on Wall Street, and Ninepins smiled when he saw it.

"It's the old treasure-house which Marks's father kept his wealth in, and Abel thought he had to keep it for luck. It's a wonder it was never cracked by the later-day cracksmen, but perhaps they thought no one would keep money in such a safe."

Ninepins knelt before the safe and went to work.

If he knew how to change a man, he also knew how to get behind the doors of a safe like that one.

It did not take him long to carry out his scheme, and in a little while he swung back the doors.

"It's child's play to do a thing like this," he said to himself. "Nothing's easier. Now I don't intend to act the fool, for I don't want all that's here—just enough to tide me over a rainy day. The goose lays golden eggs for me, and I mustn't squeeze it too hard to start with."

In another moment he fell back from before the old safe, and his face had blanched to a startling whiteness.

"Not here? Who's beat me to this spoil?" he cried, and then he went back to the safe.

"It's the emptiest nest I ever saw," he growled. "The old chap's been here. He was afraid to let me keep the secret. He wanted to play it fine on Ninepins, forgetting that I can pick him out from among a million. What a fool he is! What a dunce!"

But the safe was as bare of money as the desert is of flowers.

He dived his hand wherever it would go, but nothing struck to it.

He ransacked the safe, and would have carried off the smallest coin, but it was not for his taking, and he had to give it up.

"I'll get even with him for this. I can find him. I'll make life a burden to Jarold Jenks, and I'll show him that once in Ninepins' clutches there's no getting out with a whole skin. Nothing here—not even a blank check."

The greedy eyes of Ninepins got a ferocious gleam, and he stood erect, glaring at the safe like a tiger.

"I wish I had my hand on his throat now. He's only slipped out of sight for the present; he's still in the city, and I'll find him and bleed him. He thinks I don't know anything. I know more than he imagines. Don't I know why he wanted me to make a new man out of him, furnish him with green goggles and paint a scar over his eye? I never get a customer that I don't investigate. I never paint a scar, but I know why it had to be painted."

Ninepins threw a mad glance round the little bank, and if the banker had returned then he would have been pounced upon like a marked lamb.

"I've got to give it up," continued

Ninepins. "I've got to go away with nothing for my trouble. And I've got to depart without enough to get my supper."

He went out again, locking the door carefully behind him, and as carefully relocking the old safe.

He had left no mementoes of his visit in the little room.

The chairs he left as he found them; he had not touched the banker's private desks, and had not cared to look at the correspondence that had accumulated since Abel Marks's disappearance.

Sullenly and sour Ninepins went home.

He raised the door set in the floor of the rear room and threw a beam of light into the dungeon below.

"Not there, eh? Well, he's crawled off to keep out of my way from now on," he cried. "Taspar knows what's good for him, and he'll not interfere with me and my customers any more."

As he turned to the front room of the den he heard a noise, and some one rapped on the door.

Ninepins set the light on a table and let his caller in.

He gave vent to a little cry of astonishment when he saw his visitor, but held the door open, and let him enter.

"Well, my boy, how are you?" he said, holding out his hand, which the other touched with the tips of his gloved fingers.

"I'm all right, Ninepins. Are you alone?"

"Never have a caller when I don't care about one. You want to talk to me, boy?"

"Yes."

The man's caller was Blair Jenks, and he spurned the chair which Ninepins pushed forward, and leaned against the table and folded his arms.

"What became of father after he left you last night?" asked Prince Bullion.

"Your father, boy?"

"Yes, the gov'nor."

Ninepins shook his head.

"Are you sure he called on me. Perhaps he intended to, but never did."

The keen orbs of Blair looked searchingly at the transformer of men, and settled on his rough face.

"Pardon me. I don't accuse you of doing anything you shouldn't do, Ninepins. I know you, and on more than one occasion you've made a new man of me," and Blair laughed. "It's all right, but just now I'm a little anxious about the gov'nor."

"Isn't he at home?"

"No. Mother is nearly distracted. See here. I saw something in a newspaper to-day which set me wild. I don't know what it means, but I thought—"

"That he met with some accident?" broke in Ninepins, with a flush of fear.

"What did the newspaper say?"

The young blade drew from his pocket a clipping, which he handed to the tenant of the den below the street, and watched him while he read it.

Ninepins kept his composure.

"That's not your father," he said, handing back the paper. "A trip to the hospital would prove lost time. I can vouch for it not being your father."

"That's something," replied Blair. "It will relieve mother, who believes that he entered her room while she slept and kissed her good-bye."

"Like a spoony lover," grinned Ninepins. "He wouldn't do that, I think, boy."

"I don't know. Father of late has been in trouble. He looked to me like a man who feared some disclosure or the hand of some secret enemy."

"Why, he's the very pink of honor."

"I know that."

"He could have no enemies."

"Perhaps not. But he was here."

Ninepins could not avoid the cold, keen glance of the man whom he faced.

"Yes—on business," said he, at last.

"And you changed him. Merely a whim of his, I suppose."

"I did a little work for him."

"Was it anything like the description

of the poor, unconscious wretch in the hospital."

"No."

Ninepins avoided those eyes as he answered, but Blair Jenks did not seem to notice.

"That will relieve mother, I know; but the mystery is why isn't father at home?"

"I suppose he wanted to go away for a few hours, perhaps to take a trail of his own selection after his partner, Abel Marks."

"He wouldn't look for Marks, Ninepins. They weren't on the best of terms. He wouldn't care to hunt the lost banker for the detectives are doing that, and that would satisfy father."

"Well, he'll turn up to-morrow, perhaps," said Ninepins, with cool assurance, and this seemed to satisfy Prince Bullion.

Just beyond the little door leading to the den the young man paused and listened.

He heard inside a chuckle of glee, and it died away like the laugh of a fiend.

"He's lied to me," cried Prince Bullion. "This brute knows why Jarold Jenks came to him last night, and he is hoodwinking me. He shan't do this and boast of it."

The young roysterer turned and wrenched the knob of the door of the transformer's den.

It opened while yet the laugh lingered on Ninepins's lips, and the burly fellow started back at sight of his visitor.

"You know, and you must tell me the truth!" cried Blair, as he braced himself against the door and flashed a revolver in the fellow's face. "I am back for the truth or for blood."

Ninepins seemed to rise in new stature before the determined youth, and his face darkened.

"You can't get the first out o' me, boy, and the latter's at your service, but it'll be your own!" he cried.

Blair Jenks threw out a foot as he raised the revolver, but the quick hand of Ninepins dashed it down, and the next moment he held the would-be slayer's wrist in a grip of steel.

After this he laughed derisively in Prince Bullion's teeth.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TERRIBLE REVELATION.

"Remember, if blood is shed here it is liable to be some of your own, boy!"

Repeating his threat, Ninepins held the hand of Blair Jenks till the cocked revolver dropped from his bloodless fingers and fell to the floor.

He leaned toward the discomfited youth and leered into his face with all the stage glare of a demon.

"Sit down," and he suddenly flung Blair half way across the room, and he dropped into a chair.

"You don't believe that I told you the truth when you were in here a little while ago, eh?"

"I heard you laugh derisively when I went out."

"I chuckled, did I? And you took it for a sign that Ninepins had lied?"

Prince Bullion did not reply.

"You can't afford to doubt the word of Ninepins," continued the tenant of the den. "I know enough to wreck your home and to fetch the gray hairs of your mother in sorrow to the grave. Come, boy; you don't want to play double with me."

Blair looked into the man's face and saw it darken in the sickly glare of his one lamp.

"Your father came here and put himself and his family into my hands," he went on.

"And his family?" echoed Blair.

"And his family! That's what I said."

"Not if he were a wise man; but there's no telling what an old fool will do."

Blair Jenks's face ushered.

No man had ever talked thus to him about his father.

His blood seemed to get hot and to

dash in a lava current through his veins, but he did not resent the insult.

He knew the man before him.

He had even, on former occasions, when he was about to engage in some little trick not entirely straight, gone to him and had him transform him into another person, as it were, and in a measure he was in the transformer's hands.

"You're cooled off now, ain't you?" asked Ninepins.

"Perhaps I was a little too fast."

"That's better than trying to plant me with lead. There's the gun, boy."

Blair looked at his revolver on the table and at last put it away in silence.

"Don't fool with a lion in his own den," smiled the burly brute, showing his teeth. "Remember that wherever you go you are in the hands of Ninepins, but that as long as you play fair with him you're safe. Break with me, boy; betray me, and all is over. I close in on my enemies and the hand of Ninepins can crush!"

Blair gave the man another look, and once more he stood on the outside of the den.

He heard the derisive laugh repeated, but this time he did not challenge it, but pulled his hat over his brow and strode away.

Once he looked back and thought he saw the well-known figure of Ninepins on the sidewalk looking after him like a tiger keeps the moving prey in sight.

"I've got to go home and tell mother something," said Blair to himself. "It's a hard task; but she must hear some kind of story."

He braced up once or twice at convenient counters before he pulled up in front of the handsome house on the avenue, and let himself inside.

A tall and handsome woman with a face inured to sadness met him in the parlor, and Blair Jenks stood before his mother.

He told her a cunning story which he had made up with consummate care to the effect that he had learned that his father had been called from the city on urgent business and that he would return in a day or two.

She had never questioned the veracity of her only child, and Mrs. Jenks believed him.

"That's better than having her all unnerved," said Prince Bullion, as he turned to the library, while his mother went up stairs. "She'll sleep like a top to-night, and that will restore her for to-morrow. But I wished I had shot him to-night! Why didn't I press the trigger before he had time to seize my wrist and hold me in his terrible grip? The man simply lied—just what I've done to mother. Once in the meshes of crime always there. That's my fix. I'm deeper in the toils to-night than ever. I wish—No! wishes will do no good. I'm hunted like a felon. Like a felon! Well, how much better than a felon am I, anyhow?"

He stretched himself out on the sofa at one side of the library to find rest in a doze, and in a few minutes had fallen into a sound slumber.

The house grew still.

All at once Blair Jenks awoke, feeling that something had taken place under the family roof.

He was completely sobered, as if the shock had accomplished this, and as he sat bolt upright on the sofa, he looked toward the desk and at his father's chair.

He sprang up with a cry as he caught sight of a bent figure in the chair.

The body of a man was there, and it was leaning on the desk with the face buried in the arms which framed it, and with silence and a dim light for accessories.

Prince Bullion stood like one held spellbound by the apparition before him.

He did not know what to do, and the first object he thought of was his mother.

But his nerve came back, and he

flashed his revolver as he stepped forward.

He stood beside the recumbent figure, which had not stirred and then his hand fell upon the man's shoulder.

There was a start, not very quick, but a start for all that, and the buried head came out of its strange tomb.

The cry that started to the young man's lips never reached them, but perished midway.

He looked down into a haggard face, terribly unlike that of his father, but something told him that, despite the change, his father it was.

Over one eye was the remnant of a painted scar, and the hair, freshly dyed, showed here and there threads of gray.

Jarold Jenks, the banker, had come home.

After all the paragraph in the newspaper referred to some one else, for the goggles were missing and the crushed hat gone.

But the next moment, as the man fell back and looked up into the youth's face, a pair of green goggles fell from a pocket and spun across the desk.

Blair uttered a cry.

He darted across the room and looked up the steps beyond.

Not for the world would he have his mother see this apparition of her husband.

He would have given his life to keep back from her this terrible picture of woe and—crime!

Blair locked the door as he came back.

The light burning over the desk showed father and son each other's faces, and for a moment held them in silence bound.

"In God's name, where have you been?" cried the son.

There was an attempt at reply, but the words died in a hoarse whisper on Jarold Jenks's lips.

His glance went to the door.

"She won't hear us," said Blair. "She is sound asleep. She doesn't know you're here."

"Thank heaven for that!" was the response. "Don't tell her."

"I told her you would be at home to-morrow."

"You did?"

"That sent her off to bed in good spirits, but, father, you gave her heart a wrench when you went off that way."

"There. I'm going off again. I've got to go. You don't know, cannot understand, but the time has come. I can't stay here."

"But you must."

"Never! The time has come, I say. I am in the shadow of a great crime. You don't know of it, but I can't stay."

He would have left the chair, but Blair pushed him back.

"You went down to Ninepins?" he said.

"I did. You see what he did, too."

"Made a demon in looks out of you. You were struck by a car, too, weren't you?"

"Yes, and lay for hours in the hospital unconscious. I didn't care whether it was life or death. I would have chose death if the choice had been left to me. They haven't found him yet, have they?"

"Abel Marks?"

"Yes."

"Not yet, but—"

"Don't say that they will," cried Jarold Jenks. "I must go before they find that man. Unlock the door yonder. The night is dark. I hardly know how I came home, but I can find the way to oblivion. You have the key in your pocket, haven't you?"

"I have, and it will stay where it is. This is nonsense. You're in no shadow. It's all imagination. I have made a trade with the gold men, and I've got the title to the mine in my possession. They won't present the check till to-morrow."

"When they won't find a dollar to my credit!" laughed the banker.

"No money to your credit?" roared

Blair as he fell back. "In Satan's name, what's happened?"

"I'm as poor as the beggar in the streets out there," said Jarold Jenks.

"Impossible!"

"It is true. I am a criminal. My daughter is no more."

"Your daughter? Come. You have no daughter, father. I am your only child. I am your heir."

Jarold Jenks, with his changed face leaned back in the chair and laughed in his heir's face.

"You're no son of mine. There's none of my blood in your veins; he cried. "I hardly know whose blood you carry. Yes, I do, but it's not worth while to answer it here."

"Why, you're crazy; mad as a March hare," exclaimed the young man, as he caught his companion's arm and nearly jerked him out of the chair. "What has come over you? What spell has Ninepins exerted to bring about this terrible change?"

"Ninepins?" and the old man shuddered. "That man knows all. He holds in his dark hands the past and my future. He knows all that I do. My daughter is dead, I say, and I know that the secret will out. Abel Marks's vanishment is but a side-play in this dark game of crime and mystery. Does it baffle the detectives? Have they found the true clew yet?"

"You need a nerve tonic—a quieter. Wait! There's a sedative in that little case over there."

"None! Don't benumb my senses with anything," cried Jarold Jenks, springing up and pushing his companion away. "It is terribly true. You see what time will accomplish. I'm a criminal, I say. I have stripped the firm. I have broken the bank. I have robbed Abel Marks and lived to see my daughter perish."

Blair Jenks stood like one bereft of reason in the presence of the transformed man.

"Your mother knew of the substitution, but she keeps the secret!" the old banker went on. "When our first child was born she was placed in a hospital for a disease she had. She was supposed by the world to have died there, but she did not. The nurse who went to fetch her home brought off another woman's offspring, but a male child. We wanted a son. The nurse, paid for her work, came back with you, Blair. The little girl vanished, but I traced her. My wife never heard of her from that night, but if she reads the newspapers to-day, if she reads the story of the murder on M— Avenue, she may have learned of the death of that babe."

Jarold Jenks sunk limp and white-faced into the depths of the chair, and with a wild cry that blanched his face, Blair recoiled, to recover partially in the middle of the room and gaze upon the bent old figure with a shudder of the deepest horror.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DAZED BANKER.

Perhaps the man who had so coolly invaded Tom Tracer's apartments and left the detective for dead across his little table went away feeling that he had accomplished his purpose.

At any rate he quietly adjusted his mask and wore it to the foot of the stairs, after which he walked from the building upon the street and vanished.

His step was rapid and springy.

He seemed to feel that he had settled with one who had given him a good deal of trouble, and that he would not be bothered with a watch when he flitted between the city and Woodsdale.

Captain Sleek soon afterward turned up in another part of the city, some distance from the scene of his latest escapade, and in a room where he seemed at home.

"It was so well done, and so swiftly, that they won't suspect me," he chuckled. "I simply settled with the cool-head who went up to the place and used his keen eyes. He nearly had me on the

train and I had to make a leap for me. Now the score's settled—it's wiped out between us and I'm ahead."

He laughed over his last words and lit a cigar.

Captain Sleek was engaged in smoking when some one came to the door, and when it opened he saw the head and shoulders of Ninepins.

"On time, are you?" cried the Captain. "You got my message?"

"That's why I'm here," said the changer of faces, as he placed on the table a little box, which he took from beneath his coat.

"I thought this would be the better place for the transformation. No one will interrupt us here and, then, I will be saving a jaunt to your den."

Captain Sleek moved his chair closer to the table and Ninepins opened the box.

"What'll you have?" he asked.

"What sort of a phiz? Is that it?"

"I always gives my customers their choice. I never suggest unless they want a face that doesn't suit their frame."

"You have an eye to business, I see. Well, I want a face that will pass muster anywhere. I want a countenance that will deceive my best friends. Give me an oldish face, but a good one. You know best."

Ninepins went to work with a little mirror on the table for his customer's use, and now and then, as the face underwent a transformation beneath his skillful fingers, Captain Sleek would take up the glass and watch progress.

The transformation lasted a full hour, and when the magic face changer stepped back it was with a look of professional pride in his eye.

Captain Sleek took a long look at his new features, which added some years to his life, and then he slowly put the mirror down.

"I see you understand how to do it," he remarked, looking up into Ninepins's face.

"That's my business. It's the way I make my living."

"You do a good deal of it, don't you?"

Ninepins nodded.

Captain Sleek counted out some coin on the table and pushed it toward the long eager fingers of the face changer.

"That's all right," said Ninepins, as he gathered up the money and then closed the box of tools and pigments.

"One moment," said Captain Sleek. "Do you ever take little trips out of the city to do your work?"

"Sometimes, but," with a grin, "they generally live in the city whom I treat."

"Yes, yes, but would you go away if paid well for the work?"

"I would."

"I'll let you know," and with this Captain Sleek pushed the box of Havanass toward Ninepins, who took two and put them in his pocket.

In another moment the sole occupant of the apartment was the man with the transformed face.

He had heard the last steps of the face changer on the outside and knew that Ninepins was gone.

"It's a capital job," said he, with a laugh, once more taking a look at his face in the little glass. "I wish I had some one to try it on. I could fool Sammy with this face and—"

A little noise outside attracted him and he crossed the room to the door.

A woman greeted him at the portal, and she fell back a step at sight of him.

"Please, Mr. Carlo," she began, but the rest of the sentence died on her lips.

"Mr. Carlo has just stepped out, madam," said Captain Sleek and then he shut the door in the woman's face.

"It's all right, Ninepins," laughed he. "She didn't know me at all."

Twenty minutes later he might have been seen in the Grand Central, and as a train moved out he took a last look round the waiting room and swung himself upon the steps of the last car.

Quietly seating himself in one corner,

of the luxurious coach, he opened a paper and in a little while seemed absorbed in its contents.

He took but little notice of the scenery and the passengers, but when the train whistled for Woodsdale he moved and got out on the platform, the only passenger to alight there.

Captain Sleek walked toward the house among the cedars and up the graveled walk.

He slipped round the house to the rear door and opened it with a key which he took from his pocket.

"How did you get in here?" demanded a voice, as he entered the room beyond, and a tall man, whose face was strangely white, confronted him with tigerish mien.

"I? Why, sir, I came in by the door."

"It's the height of insolence! You must have picked the lock. You can go out."

"I guess not," and the transformed man coolly took a chair while the other towered above him in an ebullition of rage.

"You don't know me, Sammy," he laughed, and the tall one nearly lost his balance.

"Who did that?" he asked. "Who made you a new man with a face like that?"

"Ninepins, the man who understand his business."

"He's a genius!" cried Sammy Slack.

"How did you fare on the down trip?"

"Nearly lost my life."

"How?"

"I had to jump from the train."

"Thunder! not from the fast line?"

"Yes. I went down on that, you see."

"I know, but—"

"It was this way. I came face to face with the ferret."

"On the train?"

"In the seat behind me."

"Come, you're joking now."

"Not a bit of it. I came face to face with him. He had been up here on the lookout."

"That accounts for the slit in the curtain."

"In what curtain?"

"And the nail prints on the box under the window."

"Oh, he saw a good deal, as his face told me. He knew the secret, and I saw at once that something had to be done. We had it right and left in the coach for a few seconds, but I had to jump for it in the end."

"Why didn't you turn on the tracker?"

"Maybe I did, but more of this some other time. How is our gold bird?"

"He's been very quiet since you went away. He won't know you."

"I'll risk that, Sammy. You can fetch him in and let me see."

Tall Sammy quitted the room and unlocked the door of the missing banker's prison.

In a moment he had called Abel Marks into the room and the following instant the banker was staring at the newcomer at the table.

"This is a gentleman who wants to see you," said Sammy. "You wish to see him alone, do you, Mr. Blazer?"

Captain Sleek nodded and the banker dropped into the opposite chair, while Sammy retired.

For some little time the banker scrutinized the well made-up face before him and then leaned back with a sigh.

He did not know it.

"How do you like it here?" asked Captain Sleek.

"Not at all. You know me. You have heard of my vanishing from my daughter?"

"I have heard, but look here. It's nearly worth my life to befriend you. I know that you are Abel Marks. I have come to you with a proposition which may appear startling but everything depends on your answer."

"What is it?" cried Marks. "I am

dying here—dying by inches. They have made an insolent proposition, one which I will never consent to."

"That's not strange. I know something of the man who has just retired. He's liable to make a proposition which would not commend itself to you."

"He's not the man who made it. It was the other one."

"Oh, there is another one here?"

"He's not here now. He's younger and the head of the plot. They want my money and more, too. It is simply infamous. I was tolled out of New York and the tall one brought me to this house, while all the city wonders what has become of Abel Marks of Wall Street."

Captain Sleek did not betray his identity; he listened to the prisoner of the ruffians, and then said:

"I am working for your good."

"Thank heaven! I will do anything to help you carry out the plans you may have formed. Of course, I can't imagine by what means you have deluded the man in the other room, but so long as my safety is the objective point I won't ask any questions."

"That's right. Let me carry out the scheme to the letter. There's more than one way of outwitting the devil."

Abel Marks smiled and again looked into the face of the man before him.

"Now," continued Captain Sleek, dropping his voice to a whisper as he glanced toward the closed door. "I have this proposition to make. Its acceptance means freedom."

"Go on."

"If you will sign a document which I drew up before coming up here it will open the door of this house—"

"Oh, he wanted me to sign a paper, too."

"Did he? The cool rascal! Look here, Mr. Marks. You can't be too careful what you sign. Here it is."

Captain Sleek drew a folded paper from his pocket and spread it out on the table.

The eager banker took it up and began to read.

It was simply an agreement to pay the holder of the paper five thousand dollars and keep secret when he went back to New York the adventures through which he had passed.

It was compromising with crime, but what of that?—it was liberty.

It was ten times better than the document which the other had thrust at him.

"I'll sign that," cried the banker.

"It's not a hard proposition, eh?"

"Not too hard. I thank you, Mr. Blazer."

Abel Marks signed the paper and pushed it toward his companion.

"Now, when will release come?" he inquired eagerly.

"Within the next twenty-four hours."

"Must I inhabit this house that long?"

"Yes. But you will enjoy your liberty the more when you've purchased it with a little trouble."

The document was folded and put away in the man's pocket.

"Say nothing to your jailer," said he, touching Marks on the arm. "I'll fix that. The money needn't be paid till you're back in the office. I'm proud to be able to serve you, Mr. Marks."

They shook hands, the banker effusively on his part and the other less so.

"It seems like a dream to me," cried Abel Marks. "I am to go home, and alive!"

At that moment the door opened and Sammy Slack came back in the room to encounter a meaning glance from Captain Sleek.

The new game had succeeded.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LOVER ON THE RACK.

A short time before these events a man entered the cosy room of the Inspector of Police, where we have witnessed an interview between that official and Tom Tracer, and caught that official in.

This person, when inside, shut the door behind him and came over to the Inspector's desk.

As he halted there he pulled a white beard from his face and a smile wreathed the Inspector's lips.

The man before him holding the mask in his hand was the Train Spotter.

He took a seat in a chair near the desk and said:

"I'm out of the world. That is, I'm dead, although there need be no funeral over me."

The Inspector leaned on the arms of his office chair and looked into Tracer's face.

"My office is locked up and there is the effigy of a man dressed in my clothes lying half across my table."

"I see."

"I have stood face to face with the sleekest scoundrel unhung," Tom went on. "I have had a revolver fired at me at ten feet, yet I am here to tell the story of the ruffian's trigger."

"A revolver at ten feet, and you here? That's not speaking very well for the man's aim, Tracer."

"Let's call it luck."

"All right. You've had a good deal of that in your time."

Once more the ferret smiled and the Inspector waited for him to proceed.

"How is Waters getting along?" he asked.

"He seems at his wit's end. Something has turned against the fellow. He was here two hours ago and he looked as if he had passed through a month's sickness."

"Perhaps he has lost the trail."

"It's something. I didn't question him, I never do, for he never took kindly to inquiries. On the contrary, I let him have his way, but poor Waters has lost heart."

"I'm sorry for Waters," said Tom with feeling. "It's a deep mystery and would be a creditable hunt for him if he could end it successfully."

"I don't know where he is nor what has come over the spirit of his dreams," said the Inspector.

"My room is not to be visited by any one of the force," resumed Tom Tracer. "The effigy on the table is, to all intents and purposes, my dead body. If I am inquired for you think I am out of the city and you will create that impression with the callers."

"It shall be done."

Tom Tracer rose and readjusted the white beard which transformed him into an entirely different looking person and the next moment he had left the office.

In the little room near Broadway lay the effigy of the Train Spotter where Captain Sleek had seen his victim fall.

Silence filled the place and those whose duties took them past the door did not pause to look beyond, nor did they try the lock to see if the detective was in his lair.

Tom went across the city.

He stopped at last at a door which he opened and vanished.

He was confronted by a young man who threw down a newspaper and looked at him.

"Good night, Mr. Flint," said he.

Frank Flint, Miss Nora Marks's friend, turned pale and then gave his visitor another look, for the full white beard still covered the tracer's face.

"You sometimes do work for the firm of Marks & Jenks, don't you?" queried Tom.

"I used to, but of late I haven't looked over the books."

"But when you looked last were they all right?"

"I never disclose such matters outside the firms for whom I work. It wouldn't be just right, you see."

"Very well. You would keep back a crime, would you, provided the books showed one?"

Frank Flint flushed.

"You will pardon me, I trust, but I cannot see why I should answer you," he said with a start and a little effort.

"Do just what you please, young man," returned the disguised detective. "You are supposed to be a man of honor—"

"I try to be."

"I thought so. You want to help your employee, don't you, and you want to uncover the secret of Abel Marks's disappearance?"

There was no answer.

"Then I have been mistaken. I thought I was about to deal with a gentleman who did not want to see crime prosper."

"I don't, sir. It's the last thing I want to see succeed."

"Then why don't you tell me about those books?"

"I don't see why I should. I may have been mistaken. There are times when the best accountant makes blunders, and when—"

He stopped and seemed to lose color.

"In these days of little speculations, and by the best men in the city, there is no telling what may be the motive for the using of funds."

"Oh, some one has been using the funds of the Wall Street house, eh?"

"A little."

"And you don't know whether it was done by Jarold Jenks or by the missing banker."

"I confess that I do not."

"I see," said the detective. "If done by Abel Marks you would shield him."

"I would not like to be the one to bring the matter into the light, for, after all, there may have been a mistake, and the money now missing will be replaced or the matter explained as soon as we find Mr. Marks."

Tom Tracer gave the young man a quick but penetrating look, and Frank winced.

"You don't want to injure your suit in the eyes of your prospective father-in-law?" he said severely.

"I—I—"

"Come, Mr. Flint, why not be honest and open and let the bolt hit the guilty, no matter who he is?"

There was no response, and Frank Flint seemed about to slide from his chair.

"You don't know that Abel Marks is the guilty one?"

"I do not."

"How much is missing, according to the books?"

"Enough to bankrupt the house."

"So bad as that?"

"Yes. It is simply terrible. I was stunned when I came across the false entries."

"Does Mr. Marks speculate?"

"I can't say."

"Does Jarold Jenks?"

Frank shook his head.

"Who has access to the books?"

"The regular accountant."

"Who is he?"

"A young man of my age, named Jasper."

"Is that his first name?"

"No, sir, his last. He boards somewhere on the West Side. I don't know anything about him, but I don't believe he is the thief."

"You clear him, do you? Why so, Mr. Flint?"

"I don't like to tell you. See here, I don't know who you are and I can't see why I ought to tell you anything about this mystery. Let us find Abel Marks. Wait till they discover him and he may make the dark places light."

"Wait till the guilty man escapes! Wait till it is everlastingly too late," cried the disguised ferret. "You clear the bookkeeper. You give him a clean record, but you don't say the same for Abel Marks or Jarold Jenks. Have you told your suspicions to Miss Nora?"

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed the young man. "I would not do that for the world."

"She would not believe anything crooked against her father. She might be able to throw some light upon this matter. What if she knew that in your mind you have a doubt of his honesty?"

"Don't," and Frank Flint put his hands before his eyes to shut out the detective's face. "I went to a shrewd detective at the outset of the mystery and put the matter in his hands. Why can't you wait till he reports?"

"Who did you set on the trail?"

"Tom Tracer. The head officer of the railroad that employs him in its cases sent me to him. He is cool and certain. They say he never fails."

"Did you tell him about the books?"

Tom was looking the youth in the face, and he recoiled.

"I didn't think it worth while."

"You treated him as you have treated all concerned. You wanted to keep the secret to shield the guilty provided it turned out to be Mr. Marks, her father."

Frank Flint seemed to sink, crushed, into the depths of the chair, and his face grew ghastly.

"Let's go to Miss Nora and see what she says," suggested the ferret, but with a cry the other fell back.

"It would be my undoing," cried he.

"I couldn't face her with the story."

"Very well."

The ferret rose.

"Are you going to her?" asked the young man.

"Not now at any rate."

"Thank you. I'm willing to lend all the help I can, but the matter, as I have said, is in the hands of Tom Tracer and he may be nearing the end of the trail now."

"Perhaps. You can keep your thoughts. Don't shield the guilty. Abe Marks did not speculate on the firm's money."

A cry of thankfulness welled from Frank Flint's throat, and he sprang from the chair.

"Do you know that?" he cried.

"I do. But you will not take this declaration to Miss Nora?"

"I will not. Now, sir, you have in your possession the exact amount of the funds embezzled from the firm?"

"I have."

"How much has been lost?"

"Almost half a million."

"Why, that wouldn't bankrupt the house of Marks & Jenks."

"I know, but that is not all."

"Not all? What else?"

"Some one has impaired the credit of the house. I know that, too."

"Certainly the partners would not do this?"

"I don't know. I can't tell you more. My head is in a whirl. I am faint. Oh, this accursed secret! I wish I had never met that man."

He fell back in the chair and hid his face in his hands, which rested on the edge of the table.

For a moment the detective looked down upon the bowed figure and then he stepped toward him.

"I'm going now," said he, bending over the accountant. "You will tell me one thing first. What have you done with Diamond Dess's opal ring?"

There was at first a look of blank astonishment on the face lifted suddenly to the detective's gaze, and then a cry came from Frank Flint's heart.

"There, you needn't answer that question just now. I won't press it. But you will have to explain before long. You can't escape, and until you do answer you can't expect to play out the game of love with the missing banker's daughter."

"I'll tell you. It was a passing infatuation, that's all," said the young man. "I saw in the newspapers that the poor girl was dead—that she had been murdered in her house on M—avenue."

"And if the police should trace her opal ring to you, Mr. Flint, it wouldn't be a pleasant thing for Norah to hear."

"I never thought of that. My God!" and there fell at the feet of the Train Spotter the limp and unconscious figure of the Wall Street clerk.

For half a minute Tom Tracer looked at the tableau on the carpet, and then turned away.

"It will teach him a lesson," he said under his breath.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAND OF A VILLAIN.

Captain Sleek, the man who had visited Abel Marks, the missing banker, in the house behind the cedars at Woodsdale, came back to the city with the signed document in his possession.

Thanks to the make-up from the hands of Ninepins, he was able to elude any people who might have been looking for him, and he fearlessly walked Broadway under the gas lights and appeared to have scored a great victory.

Swallowed up in the roar and rush of New York, he vanished, to turn up again within a short time in a house where he seemed to be at home, for he threw off his coat and cast himself upon a sofa.

"Fool! Why didn't I look to see if he's there yet?" he suddenly exclaimed, springing up and donning the cast-off garment. "It won't take long. I can go thither and steal a look. If the coast isn't very clear I won't go up, but if it is, why I'll look in upon the trailer at the end of the trail."

Once more he was on the street and was making his way to a certain part of the city where, as he believed, still rested the victim of his swoop.

Captain Sleek did not pause till he gained the building in which Tom Tracer had had his quarters, and finding everything apparently safe, he slipped upstairs and glided to the door.

No one saw him.

He did not open the portal, but merely drew his body up so that he could look down into the room through the transom.

One glance seemed to satisfy his curiosity, for, with a smile, he dropped, cat-like, to the floor and made off.

"Safe yet," said he under his breath. "He may not be found for several days yet. The room is cool—"

He said no more, for he was on the sidewalk again, and in another moment was hustling away.

This cool head believed that the effigy in the detective's room was Tom Tracer himself.

Perhaps he would be suddenly and terribly undeceived in the near future.

The hand of fate might fall upon his shoulder and he might some day look into the stern face of his supposed victim.

But he did not think of these things as he hurried away; they did not cross his path to disturb his dreams, and in a short time he had reached a house different from the one he had lately quitted.

He rung the bell and waited in the little vestibule.

He was in a good quarter of the city, and the house where he had rung was as good as its neighbors, and they were well-to-do buildings.

As the door opened and the maid saw the well made-up figure of Captain Sleek on the step, she was in the act of asking him for his card when a voice in the hall said:

"Admit the gentleman, Georgie," and when the girl opened the door a little more the Captain entered.

He tramped straight to the parlor where Nora Marks awaited him, and in another second he occupied one of the elegant chairs with plush-covered arms.

"My name is Blazer, Miss," said he, looking at the missing man's daughter. "I have here a little order from your father."

His hand vanished in his right hand pocket for half a second and was then withdrawn.

Nora watched his movements with eagerness and started slightly at sight of the paper which he handed her.

"You are aware, I suppose, that father has not returned?" she said, returning his gaze.

"Quite well aware of it. He is in need of several things and, as you see, he has written for them."

"He is found, then?"

"He is found and will see you soon. I am his trusted friend—"

Nora had cast her eye over the paper trembling in her hand and was reading it once more.

"You shall have the papers," said she to her visitor. "I recognize father's signature."

"Oh, there's no doubt about its genuineness. A thousand people in the city could swear to it."

Nora rose and went to the door.

"The papers are in his desk. I saw them tied up the other day but did not open them."

The man followed her and entered the library with her.

The banker's daughter proceeded to the desk in the middle of the room and unlocked it.

"Here they are," said she. "They have not been disturbed since father went away. I suppose he wants to see them before his return."

"Exactly."

One glance at the package seemed to tell Captain Sleek that his mission had succeeded, for he transferred it to his bosom and then looked at the girl.

"Would you mind taking a letter to father?" she asked, with a flush of excitement.

"Not at all, miss."

Nora seated herself in her father's chair and took up the pen.

With steady hand she penned a note expressing her joy at hearing from her father and telling him how willing she was to be able to carry out the wishes expressed in the letter the stranger had brought, and then she signed her name with a little flourish which drew a smile to Captain Sleek's face.

Nora, watched all the time by the plotter, sealed the note and reverently touched it to her lips ere she handed it to the scheming scoundrel, who put it with the papers.

"You've been lonely since he went away, I suppose?" said he.

"It was torture till the letter came. Did you know that he sent one?"

There was a quick start on the Captain's part, but he instantly recovered.

"Yes, he wanted to let you know that he was safe, and so he wrote you to that effect. He will be with you ere long, if nothing happens, and then the mystery, not so much of a one after all when you hear it, will be cleared up."

Nora bowed and thanked him again.

Once more on the street Captain Sleek almost burst into a laugh of triumph.

"Everything comes my way," he cried. "This is the easiest play of all. No risk in this, for the unsuspecting girl is not of the breed that suspicions everybody. I had her in my hands from the first, and she didn't question the letter. I was lucky to pick it up from the desk where she laid it, and she can't have it to show to the police. I'm in luck!"

He did not stop till he had reached the house from which he sought the detective's door, and then he drew forth the package acquired by such infamous skill.

"I'll see if they're all here," he said, seating himself at the table.

Rapidly he ran over the papers, some six in number, and not very lengthy.

"They're all right," said he. "I hold the fortune in my hands at last, and if he wants them back it will cost him a good deal."

He tied them up as they had been handed to him by Nora Marks and put them away in an adjoining room over a couch and by the aid of a secret button in the wall.

"Now for the last play! The old man was easily handled. He fell into the net nicely, and all I had to do was to present the paper with the sympathetic ink."

Captain Sleek went out again.

Once more among the crowds on Broadway he hastened away and jostled many people who did not suspect that the face so adroitly manufactured by Ninepins belonged to one of the coolest men in the metropolis.

All at once he was seen by a man, who

stopped and looked at him a second time.

"I know the build of those shoulders," said this person in a low voice. "I remember the man who faced me in the house on M— Avenue, and finally escaped. Can it be Carlo Mayne? Have I found him at last?"

Waters, the detective, did not let the man escape him.

He threw himself upon his trail and followed him with the cunning of the fox.

Waters had everything at stake now; he seemed to have had new life injected into him as he tripped behind Captain Sleek, nor did he stop until his quarry vanished.

Waters looked perplexed, for the man had dodged into an alley, but only for a second.

He came out again, and this time was better observed by the discomfited ferret.

"It is Carlo," he exclaimed. "That is the man who killed Diamond Dess and who eluded me in the house of crime. Now he shall not escape again."

But ten minutes later the detective stood dazed under a lamp with his brain in a strange whirl and his nerves terribly shaken.

He had let his eagerness get the better of his judgment.

So sure was he that he had cornered the hunted quarry that he had caught up with Captain Sleek and had let his hand fall upon his shoulder.

As the Captain turned he uttered the name of Carlo Mayne and with the suddenness of a thunderbolt a clinched hand struck him in the face.

Waters reeled away to fall against the lamp-post, and to let the game escape once more.

It had occurred in the twinkling of an eye, and by the time the stunned detective recovered the other was gone.

Poor Waters!

Failure seemed to lie in wait for him and defeat to be his portion.

Captain Sleek was far away and lost to sight by the time the detective recovered and Waters looked around, so completely baffled that he bit his lip almost through.

If he could have followed his man—if he could have kept at the captain's heels after the blow—he would have seen him enter a little house some distance from the scene of the encounter and not far from the river.

He locked the door carefully behind him and descended a flight of ten steps beneath the floor.

There he found another door, which he opened, and in a little while turned on the gas in a cell-like apartment.

He could put his trained ear to the wall and hear the swish of the tide, and he did this for an instant to straighten and smile.

"When it comes to the end, if fate should play her votary false, Gabriel will find me here," said he. "This is the last retreat of Captain Sleek, as some call me, notably the old General, who lives on M— avenue. It's a great game, but the prize is worth the risk, and I live to baffle all the man-hunters."

He took a turn about the room and once more listened to the river; then he quitted the place and again went back to the main house.

He was alone.

"She's very pretty, but Flint can have her," he exclaimed, thinking suddenly of Nora Marks. "Flint's an easy-going young fellow, but he must keep out of my way. Out of the way of the tiger, that's it."

Just an hour after these last occurrences Captain Sleek, still wearing the made-up face, was on the street, and encountered a man who suddenly grasped his arm.

He looked down into the face of Ninepins.

"A man's watching you," said the transformer, under his breath.

"Where?"

"Look back at the corner just passed. See him?"

Captain Sleek threw a look toward the designated spot, and then looked at Ninepins again.

"I see. Tell him off. Can you do it?"

"I can try."

"Do it."

"What's it worth?"

"A ten."

"It's a go. I'll see you later."

Captain Sleek moved on, a dark scowl on his brow, and Ninepins went to the task.

"Waters is patient, but a fool," said the man with the made-up face. "I must silence him, some time, like I silenced the other trail lynx."

Then he turned a corner and vanished.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRACK OF A PASSION.

Blair Jenks, or "Prince Bullion," sat in a cosy little room of the club and sipped his wine.

It was the morning after his father's startling return home and the strange confrontation in the library.

The young man's nerves were a little shaky, as was evidenced by the tremor of his hand as he lifted the claret to his lips, and he looked like he had passed through an exciting episode.

He was quite alone, for the hour was too early for the usual run of club frequenters, but Blair seemed to be waiting for some one, for he glanced at the door every time it opened, and smiled even when disappointed.

At last there came to his face a smile that lingered, and a man who caught sight of him the moment he entered the club-house came forward.

"Am I a trifle late?" queried this individual, as he seated himself at Blair's table.

"Not at all, Hardesty. I couldn't keep it to myself."

"What's that? You look pale. By Jove, boy, you've seen a ghost."

"Not a ghost, Hardesty, but flesh and blood. The Guv'nor came home last night."

"Came home? Where had he been?"

"Heaven knows, but he looked as if he had passed through the outskirts of Hades."

"Well, me."

Blair sipped some more wine and told the story of his father's startling return to the library in the striking disguise furnished by the deft fingers of Ninepins.

Hardesty was a private detective, the only person of the kind Prince Bullion had ever taken to, for he did not like detectives as a class, but there was something about the slick-tongued Hardesty that pleased him.

"The strangest part is to come," said Blair Jenks. "He went away again."

"What, you let him go, did you?"

"He slipped out. I went to the cellar for another bottle for his nerves, and when I came back he was gone."

"I thought you would have taken the precaution to lock him in."

"I had the key to the front door in my pocket, but, hang it all, I didn't think of the back door. He went out that way. It threw me into the tremors, and the bottle I had brought up dropped from my hands."

"No wonder, boy. It was enough to give one the shakes. By the way, didn't your father tell you anything about his absence?"

"But little. His face was Ninepins's work. You know, Ninepins, the face-fixer?"

Hardesty nodded.

"But the mere coming home last night wasn't the worst of it. I shrink from the rest."

"What's that?"

"The terrible and astounding revelation he made."

"Upon what subject?"

"It concerns me. He said—Wait, Hardesty, I've got to steady my nerves a little first."

Prince Bullion gulped down his claret and waited a moment before he continued.

"It all seems a dream, a horrid vision of the night," he said. "I can't believe—that is, hardly—that I was awake last night. He said that his daughter was dead."

"Why, he must have been raving. The brain must have been in a whirl."

"His or mine? Well, no difference which," grinned Blair. "There was madness somewhere. But he reiterated it, and it nearly drove me wild. I am not his child, but a hospital substitution. My ancestry is known to him, and, perhaps, to his wife."

"Impossible! This man must be found."

"Yes, Jarold Jenks, mad or sane, must turn up, and he must tell the truth. He said that the girl killed recently on M— Avenue was his child."

"Diamond Dess! Come, Jenks, this is too much!" cried Hardesty. "You've either been drunk or your father is as mad as a March hare."

"Either one will suit me if proved," was the answer. "But find him for me, Hardesty. Don't let grass grow under your feet. Why, it's simply torture."

"You didn't let your mother know—"

"God, no! I couldn't do that. Why, she doesn't know that he was in the house last night."

"She could affirm or disprove the story he told you."

"Yes, yes; but I couldn't go to her with the question. It burned my tongue when I thought of it. Just look at it, Hardesty. If it is true, what am I worth? What are my prospects?"

"Not very good, that's a fact," smiled the private spotter. "It's a terrible story, but it's the ravings of a mad brain."

"I hope so. To think of it, living with him all this time, and then to be told that the murdered girl—Diamond Dess they call her—was his child and heir."

"Calm down a little," said Hardesty. "Don't let any one see your excitement. Leave it to me."

"I'll give you a cool thousand if you find him. Don't let grass grow under your feet. He is somewhere in the city. Ninepins changed his face, you know. He keeps a run of the whereabouts of his patrons, they say."

"To a certain extent only. He can't keep track of a madman."

Prince Bullion let the man slip away, and then tried to tone down his nerves with nicotine, but the trial was a failure.

On the street he met with much better success.

The air seemed to act as a bracer, and he started off.

"Why not take a look at her?" suddenly flashed across his mind. "She must be above ground yet, and—I'll do it!"

Blair Jenks knew where to find the still unburied victim of the dagger.

He was admitted to the presence of the dead, and for some time he stood by the body, looking down into the marble face.

"So this is the child of Jarold Jenks," he said to himself. "It's false! I won't believe it. Why, my father is mad—mad as sin, and when he comes back to reason he'll laugh at the crazy idea."

He tramped from the scene, and went home.

He went into the library and sat down at the desk.

"I wonder if he carried anything off with him last night," he said, opening the desk, and bending over it.

"He did! He did! He took away the check book and the little memorandum that were here yesterday. But he left this."

The young man picked up a little package which he knew was not there when he last inspected the desk.

His hands trembled as he opened it, and as he uttered a cry he heard a footfall behind him, and turned to confront the banker's wife.

Martha Jenks stood like a statue before her son.

"Who was here last night, Blair?" she demanded.

"No one."

"He answered her without a blush, and looked calmly into her white and tensely drawn face."

"I heard voices in this room. I heard them distinctly, and one sounded like my husband's."

"I saw no one, mother."

All this time the young man was trying to hide the little package he had taken from the desk.

He could almost cover it with his hand, but not altogether, and Mrs. Jenks saw his futile efforts.

"What have you taken from the desk?" she asked.

He could conceal it no longer, and the next moment he held out his hand.

"I found this there a moment ago."

She advanced and took it from him.

"Father must have left it here the other day," he said.

"It was not there yesterday," cried Martha Jenks. "I looked at the contents of the desk then, and—Merciful heavens! it is the proof of the deed!"

She would have reeled away, if the arm of Blair had not caught and supported her.

As he held her up he looked at what she held in her hand, and saw there a tiny shoe, an infant's slipper.

"It is the proof of the past!" echoed the hapless woman, without a vestige of color in her face. "It is my daughter's slipper!"

She nearly fell from the young man's arms, but he supported her to the sofa.

"He came back last night, my husband did," she said. "Don't keep it from me."

Blair's face hardened.

"He was here," he said.

"And left this. Where did he go?"

"I cannot say, but I will find out."

"Find him. You don't know it all," said the woman. "You don't know the double secret that has preyed upon my mind so long."

"Then, I am not your child?"

She turned her head away, and kept silence.

"You need not fear to tell me," he replied. "Jarold Jenks told me last night, but I would not believe."

"So he told you about the trick of years and years ago? I don't wonder that you doubted him."

"I could not believe such a horrible narrative, such an incredible tale."

"No, no!"

"But it was true?"

"It was."

Blair Jenks turned from the woman, who sprung up and caught his arm.

"What are you going to do?" she cried.

"I intend to make him make restitution. He shall make up for the past, or I will kill him!"

"You will do that, will you?"

"Why not? He robbed my parents of their child. He shall tell me who they were."

"Don't force that secret from him."

"I will, or tell the one he would not have the world to know for all its wealth."

"What secret is that?"

"The check book which is missing would show, and the memorandum could tell a terrible tale. He is a defaulter. More than that. He has robbed his partner. Jarold Jenks has broken up the house of Marks & Jenks. He is a felon!"

The poor woman released Prince Bullion's arm and staggered back.

"It is vengeance and hatred now!" continued Blair. "I intend to find him. The past shall be told and the future shall shut him up in a criminal's cell. You can't hold me back nor keep me from my quarry, though he is your husband. I will find him and strike. The felon banker of New York shall feel the hand of the one he has wronged. I will avenge my parents!"

In another moment Blair Jenks was on the street and the first cab found took him away.

"Ninepins first, and then a hunt for Hardesty, and for the other one," surged through his mind as the cab rattled over the stones. "I will employ every detective in Gotham, but what I find him. I will rake the city with the hands of vengeance. I will find this wolf in sheep's clothing."

He urged the driver faster over the streets, and at last was set down within a stone's throw of Ninepins's den.

His blood still burned his veins as he dashed down the steps and burst like a storm-cloud into the place.

But he stopped the moment after he crossed the threshold for the place was tenantless and still.

"Ninepins, where are you?" cried Blair.

The only answer he received was silence, and this maddened him.

In vain did he search the house, but the face-fixer was not to be found.

"Now for Hardesty or Jarold Jenks, the felon," he exclaimed as he rushed away.

Two squares away he was stopped by a hand laid on his arm, and he looked into the face of one whom he did not know.

"You will come with me, Mr. Jenks," said the stranger. "I want you for the murder of Diamond Dess."

Prince Bullion laughed outright.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRAIN SPOTTER IS BEATEN.

Prince Bullion drew back the length of the detective's arm, but he did not laugh again.

Instead of the smile there came to his face a deathly pallor, and when the grip of the spotter tightened he felt that he was to be baffled in his hunt for Jarold Jenks.

He had failed to find Ninepins at home, and now he was to be shut up on a charge of murder.

An hour later, as he stood in a cell at the station, with the serious charge against him, he heard a step come down the corridor outside, and the sound ceased at the iron door.

The face which confronted him was that of a man at least fifty, with a gray beard and keen eyes.

Blair Jenks pressed his own face against the bars and tried to recognize his visitor.

The stranger looked once, but it was a keen, scrutinizing look, and without a word he turned away.

In another minute this person turned up in the private room attached to the station.

"It's Blair Jenks, sure enough," he said to the official in charge. "The man is innocent."

"Don't tell Waters that. The man is losing his grip."

"He certainly is when he lodges such a charge against 'Prince Bullion.'"

"Poor Waters! His last trail has turned his head," said the Inspector.

The other smiled in a sympathetic manner, and walked away.

Blair Jenks's visitor was the Train Spotter, and when he left the police station, he sought out the Grand Central Depot and boarded a train.

Just in time to catch it, he seated himself in the smoker and leaned back to reflect.

"It's a queer trail," said he, musingly. "It's one of the strangest of my career, and it has turned Waters's brain."

He relapsed into silence, and cigar smoke now and then hid his face.

Once more he alighted at Woodsdale, but not in the same garb as that in which he had last visited the place.

The house behind the cedars was to be visited again, but this time in daylight.

The last time he saw it was under the starry heavens, and then he stood on the little box behind the house and

looked down into the nest of the plotters.

Woodsdale was stirring with life that day, and the Train Spotter made his way up the narrow gravelly walk toward the house.

The cedars, stirring lightly in the breeze, showed him now and then their hearts, and the gayly dressed children passed him with a look and a smile.

Tom Tracer did not go direct to the suspected house.

While he had come up to Woodsdale to stand face to face with Abel Marks, the missing banker, he did not care to precipitate matters, and so he passed on into the centre of the little village and sauntered here and there in the warm sunlight.

At last, without meeting any one whom he questioned, he turned back and struck the gravel again.

The sunlight fell upon the house in the trees, and he noticed that the windows were closed.

The detective walked up on the porch and rang.

The tones of the bells echoed throughout the place, but no one answered the ring.

What had become of Sammy Slack?

Did not the tall guardian of the missing man still inhabit the place to watch like a human Cerberus over his charge?

Tom rang again with a little more emphasis than before, and waited awhile longer.

He had come hither to enter that house, and to solve, to his satisfaction at least, one mystery, and, quitting the porch, he went to the rear of the premises and halted at the door there.

This time he did not ring, but after gently trying the door he launched his body against it, to see it quiver and fall in.

The crash of the falling door did not seem to rouse any one, and the Train Spotter stood for a moment amid intense silence in a semi-darkened room. The nest seemed empty!

Tracer went to the door of Abel Marks's prison and opened it with ease. No one greeted him.

He had come too late; the house in the trees was empty!

He went back to the parlor and up to the table.

He saw that the flight, while it had been hasty, was a well-planned one, for the papers which he had seen on the stand were gone, and nothing remained to tell of late occupancy.

Tracer let a smile ripple over his face, for he had been cunningly baffled by the pair.

Once more he stood in the sunshine, and now he caught sight of a watching face behind some curtains in an adjoining house.

He went over and rang the bell, to be confronted by an elderly lady in a white cap.

"I'm afraid you will not find any one at home, now," said she, before Tracer could speak.

"In the next house, you mean?" said he. "When did they go?"

"Last night. There were two of them—the tall man and an old gentleman, the invalid, from the city."

"The invalid? Was he able to depart?"

"He walked quite well. I can't say anything about our neighbors, for they came and went like spirits, and did not bother us."

"What time did they go, Madam?"

"It was just before the 10:30 Express to the city. They took no baggage with them that we saw. My husband went to see if they got off, for he had taken an interest in the people over there, but he did not reach the train in time, and it was just leaving the depot when he got there. So he was too late, and I had a laugh at his failure."

Tracer could not repress a smile.

Abel Marks had gone back to the city in care of Sammy Slack, the giant, and

thither he would have to direct his trail.

But he would have another hour in Woodsdale, and he did not care to put it in in idleness.

"I say, mister, would you just stop a minute?" said a voice behind him, and Tom turned to see at his side a boy nearly out of breath.

"You've been looking in the old house down yonder, I see," continued the lad.

"What of that, boy?"

"You didn't find 'em in, did yer?"

"It seems to be empty. I am too late to see my friends."

"Friends?" gasped the boy. "Wish you could have seen 'em last night. I say, you want ter keep the tall man from abusing the littler one."

"Did he do that?"

"Yes. You see it's this way with me: My name's Starry, and I don't shine o' nights for nothing. Last night I wanted ter take another look inter the house back yonder, and so I went to my old place, the back roof. Presently the tall man goes into the room to the right of the parlor, and fetches the other man out. He told him that he had to go away. The other one didn't want ter go, and acted as if he expected to wait till the fellow who came up here some time ago and had a confab with him and got him to sign a paper, which I see done."

"But it was no use. The tall man had his way, and in the end the other one let him fix up his face and disguise him till you'd a hardly knowed him. Then they went away and I got down from my perch and saw 'em take the trail. The little man went away under protest, and as if he feared the tall one. It looked to me like it was go or die in the house back there."

Tracer, who had listened to this tale of the flight, gave the boy a coin, and then drew from him an exact description of Abel Marks's disguise, after which he went to catch the train back to the city.

Once more on the trail of Abel Marks, he turned up in New York and hastened over to where Shivers, the depot watch, stood.

"They came back—the tall man and his charge," said the detective.

"When?"

"They must have come in on the 11:20."

"I didn't see 'em."

"You were on duty, Shivers?"

"Yes."

Tracer had to be content with the watch's statement, and in a little while he was gone.

It was now a hunt for the fugitives.

The trail seemed lost in the city; he had lost the most important quarry, and for a little while he stood nonplused and apparently at his wits' end.

But all at once a shadow fell across the detective's path.

There came down the street, not far from the Grand Central, the tall figure of Sammy Slack.

No start told him of the proximity of the keen spotter.

As the tall one came forward, watched by the Train Spotter, he seemed to be off his guard, as if he was safe at last.

Tom fell in behind the man, and tracked him to the ferry house.

As Sammy Slack seated himself on one of the benches he hid his face behind a newspaper and read in silence.

Boat after boat came and went, but he kept his bench with the patience of a modern Job.

All this time the sharp eyes of the ferret watched him, never for a moment losing sight of his prey.

At last Sammy, disappointed, as his face indicated, folded the paper and put it away.

Once more, with a glance at the last passenger to enter the ferry from the last boat, he started off, and his tall figure rose above the throngs on the pavement.

"Not out of my sight till you take me to the quarry," said the tireless tracker. "You must show me Abel Marks."

Would Sammy Slack do this, or would he mislead the ferret, and play out successfully another hand?

It was another lengthy chase, but at last Tom saw the man enter a small house on a quiet street some distance away from the centre of the city.

He wondered if Abel Marks, the banker, was in there.

At any rate, he had run the tall plotter down, and he intended to investigate further.

The shutters of the suspected place were closed despite the hour, and the place looked deserted.

But Tom waited.

The moments waned, and the day slipped by.

No one came out, and no one appeared to send out to him the slightest sign of life within.

Suddenly there came from the house a strange sound, like a half-suppressed cry, and this roused the indefatigable spy.

The time for action had come.

Tom Tracer reached the steps and grasped the knob.

As he gave it a wrench the door opened, and he fell back as a man appeared.

It was not Sammy Slack.

Tracer stepped inside, and looked into the eyes that seemed to scintillate like a basilisk's.

"Well, sir?" demanded the man. "What is it?"

What could Tracer, the ferret, say?

"Do you live here?" he asked.

"Would I be here, if I didn't? Why, I've inhabited this house for ten years."

"The gentleman who entered it a while ago—"

"I'm that person."

The detective smiled, and then broke into a light laugh.

"But it was a tall man," said he. "That gentleman is a friend of mine—"

"Come, sir, you're mistaken. No one has entered this house but myself for days. What might your mission be?—to see the 'tall gentleman?'"

Tracer had been baffled again; he could only say that after all he had been deceived, and then quietly take his departure.

"He's a cool and a keen one, is Sammy Slack," he said to himself as he bowed himself out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPOTTER AND SPOTTER.

"Come with me, Tom."

These words were spoken on the street ten minutes after the Train Spotter's last adventure, and they still sounded in his ear when he looked down into the face of Waters, the ferret.

The poor fellow's face showed the vexation and worry of his last trail, but his eyes had been keen enough to penetrate Tom Tracer's mask and to pick him out on the street.

Tracer stared at his brother detective and went away with him.

Waters said nothing more until, unlocking the door of his little room near Broadway, he escorted Tom inside.

"He gets into my trap and then slips out again!" he began at once. "I had him once in the house—on the very scene of the crime, but he got away. But, I got another clew, and that gave me a strange start. I've locked one man up, and I'll lock up the whole city but what I catch the right one."

Tracer thought of Blair Jenks in the cell at the station, but did not refer to him.

"They're all against me. They want to ruin the best detective in New York," continued Waters. "It's a foul conspiracy, Tracer, and you seem to be mixed up in it. Wait! I don't say that you're mixed up in the plot against me, but you're on the same trail, and your hand will baffle me if it can."

"I don't want to rob you of one laurel, and I won't if I can help it," averred Tom. "You must brace up, Waters. It's a deep trail. The girl's murderer will be found."

"I had him."

"Where?"

"In the house on M— street. He held me against the wall and nearly choked the life out of me. I fell like one dead on the floor, and when I came to he was gone. I had the man, I say; I stood face to face with Carlo, and told him to his teeth that it was his dagger that did the deed. But since then, it's been against me. I can't pick up the old trail."

"That's because you've let this little mishap get the better of you," assumed the Train Spotter.

"No, it's not that; it's fate," was the answer. "I can grasp things all right for a time, but suddenly they get beyond my depth, and I flounder in deep water. It's all up with Waters. They'll hoot him on the street before the week's out."

"The inspector has confidence in you."

"Why should he?"

Waters was pacing the room like a man whose brain is in a whirl of doubt and excitement.

His face had lost flesh within the past few days, and his eyes had in their depths an almost maniacal glare.

"Things will come your way yet, Waters," encouraged the watchful detective.

"Not till I'm dead!" There's something I've found out, though it's not just my trail," he asseverated. "I've found Jarold Jenks, Abel Marks's partner, and he's nearly dead. Do you want to see him?"

"Where is the banker?"

Waters passed his hand across his forehead as if to collect his thoughts, and then sprang at Tracer and seized him by the collar—a singular action.

"I know now. It's a strange place for him to be, and you wouldn't know him, Come! You're not afraid to follow me?"

Tracer rose with eagerness, and the other led him from the house and called the first cab they met.

As the vehicle rolled away, the half-dazed ferret talked:

"It's Jenks, and yet it's not! It looks like some of Ninepins's work, it's so well done, and the old man seems to be in hiding from the shadow of impending fate."

"How came you to find him?"

"I can't tell you. It must be fate steering me from the crime to another little mystery."

The cab soon drew up in a square. Waters looked out. "This is the starting point," he announced. "Now for Jarold Jenks!" he cried, springing out. "I say, Tom, if I have found a trail for you, you must return the compliment."

"I will, Waters. I'll help you find the hand that killed Diamond Dess."

"Then you think I've had the wrong man locked up? I caught sight of Prince Bullion as he came out of Ninepins's, and something told me that he was the man. It went through my brain like a streak of light. I caged him on the spur of the moment, and he's in durance yet," and Waters broke into a boisterous laugh.

Across the square hastened the mad ferret, Tom Tracer at his heels.

They went down the first alley on the street which they struck beyond the trees, and the Train Spotter's guide ran up a flight of three steps which terminated at a narrow door of old-fashioned make.

Waters knocked, and they heard footsteps in the hall.

"That's the she Cerberus of the place," explained Waters, with a glance at his comrade, and then the door opened.

Waters at once pushed past the woman, who had opened the door.

"Is he here yet?" he demanded.

The woman's figure seemed to gain an inch in stature as she covered Tracer with her finger.

"Who is that man?" she cried.

"Never mind that, madam! He's all right, but—"

"He's gone!"

Waters looked at Tom and smiled.

"We'll see," said he, with a grin. Then he turned once more upon the female.

"He's not here," was repeated, but the ferret paid no attention to this, and at once stepped to the foot of a stair.

The woman sprang at the men like a pantheress, but the arm of Waters pushed her back and held her against the wall, while he said fiercely:

"We are the law, Madam Viper! You can't keep us back. You must let us go to the man up-stairs." And Waters, throwing her aside, motioned to Tom as he mounted the steps.

Up they went, and gained the landing overhead.

"That's the door," indicating a door a short distance away. "You'll find Jarold Jenks in that little room."

Tracer stepping forward immediately opened the door.

A dim light for a moment prevented him from seeing who occupied the cramped place, but at last he made out a figure lying on a cot with the face turned toward the wall.

He bent over the form and touched the face.

"He's dead!" he exclaimed in audible tones.

"You've found Jarold Jenks," said the crazed ferret, now at his side.

"Yes, but look at him!" and Tom held up one hand. "He is dead! Call the woman. Don't let her escape. Maybe it's another crime!"

Waters started for the door, but another exclamation stopped him.

"Look! It's not murder, Waters," cried the Train Spotter. "See these bits of paper. They litter the floor about the couch. He tore something up before he died."

In another instant Waters was picking up the bits and cramming them into his pocket.

"Well, you've found him, have you?" and the detectives turned, to stand face to face with the woman.

"This man is Jarold Jenks, the Wall street banker. You gave him shelter."

"I did. I would do it again. He came to me in distress, and I would be an ungrateful soul if I had refused to receive him."

"Who are you, woman?" demanded Tom.

"Never mind that."

Waters broke out into a laugh.

"She is Sara Shook!" he answered for her.

"Of course you gave him shelter," continued the detective. "I don't blame you, Sara Shook. But you say he voluntarily came to you. What was his explanation when he came?"

"That's between me and the dead," was the answer.

"You knew him well?"

"Ask him," and Sara pointed to Waters.

"I can answer that," put in Waters. "Years and years ago, she did him a favor, and from that time on this woman has lived on the bounty of Jarold Jenks."

"It that true?"—no reply.

"You must speak," cried Waters, his eyes getting the old mad light again as he started toward the woman, who retreated and suddenly flashed a dagger in his face.

Waters stopped.

"She'll wing you, Waters!" Tom warned.

"And I'll play with her like Carlo played with me."

At mention of the name Carlo, Sara Shook uttered a cry and staggered against the wall behind her.

"Did you see! She knows Carlo!"

The next moment Waters was faced by the tigress, and but for the hand of Tracer he would have felt the descending blade.

The knife was turned aside, and the two detectives held the struggling creature in their vise-like grasp.

"You have heard of Carlo?" asked Waters.

The eyes flashed, that was all; the lips did not move.

By and by Sara calmed down, and the ferrets released her, to see her quit the room, as they directed their attention once more to the occupant of the low couch against the wall.

"It is Ninepins's work," decided Tom Tracer. "No other face-fixer could do a job like this."

"But he is Jarold all the same. This man died at the end of his crime."

The Spotter was looking at some marks on the wall above the bed, and he did not reply.

"What is it, Tom? Did he leave some clew behind?" asked Waters, starting forward and looking closely at the wall.

"There's a scrawl here," was the answer. "It is a mere scrawl, made by a death-stricken hand and directed by a dying mind. See! Here's a broken line and a few jumbled letters—"

"But it's a sentence," interrupted Waters. "It's a clew all the same."

Both men were on the bed, and their keen eyes were trying to trace out the writing on the wall.

"Look! Here's the beginning," cried the excited Waters. "My head is in a whirl again. Make it out, Tom!"

Tracer did not take his eyes from the lettering, but before he could make out the first sentence, the room rang with a loud report, and the plastering was shattered before his face.

Sara Shook had come back!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAP IN THE DARK.

The shattered plastering, falling in a shower in the Train Spotter's face nearly blinded him.

With a mad cry Waters sprang across the room and seized the frantic woman at the door, the smoking weapon still in her hand.

"You won't see what he wrote!" she exclaimed. "It is gone now!"

The Train Spotter came to the woman.

"Do you know what it was?" he asked.

"I do not, but you will not translate it. He died alone. I was not in when the end came."

"This man called you Sara Shook."

"That is my name."

"He says, too, that you have lived for years on Jarold Jenks' bounty."

"To some extent that is true also," was the reply. "We have been friends for years, but he did not wholly support me."

Tracer turned to the bed again, and his gaze fell upon the face of the dead.

"There's a corner left yet," exclaimed Waters. "Look, Tom, the bullet did not take quite all the message."

In an instant the detective had thrown himself across the couch, and his hands were bringing together several bits of plastering that contained parts of the writing.

"What is it?" asked Waters.

"It is nearly enough," was the answer, and the speaker looked at Sara Shook. "It's a confession of crime. It is well, perhaps, that Jarold Jenks is dead."

"Yes, it is well," echoed Sara.

The woman was now permitted to depart, and the detective comrades, having nothing to gain by a longer stay, decided to depart.

On the next floor they heard a noise in one room, but they did not encounter Sara Shook when they left the house, and in a short time they were on the street.

"Who is that woman?" asked Tom. "You have followed this side trail some, Waters."

"It is the old nurse—the woman who,

years ago, had charge of a children's ward in one of the city hospitals."

"But how did she link her name with the fortunes of the banker?"

"That you'll learn by and by. Just now, Tom, let us attend to the other clew."

"I must find Abel Marks first."

"Find him, but come to me when you have done that, and let us work together."

The Train Spotter promised, and left Waters at his own door.

As the day was closing, the Train Spotter might, in his well-assumed disguise, have been seen in a certain part of New York, trailing the tall man who had baffled him a few hours before, and determined that he should not escape him again.

For some time Tom kept him in sight; then the shadowed man ran across another fellow, with whom he held a short confab.

"That must be the other one," concluded the Tracer. "Captain Slick in new feathers, I see."

The person who had held the brief conversation with Sammy Slack passed on, walking at a fast pace, but the Train Spotter kept after the tall man and tracked him back to the house where he had been baffled in his queries.

The door closed behind the well known figure; then, in a little while, opened again, this time to admit the Tracer—now determined to find his man and nab him.

In he went, and after groping around cautiously, finally reached a closed door, which he softly opened.

Within all was darkness, and he paused on the threshold.

Just then a door which he did not see opened and closed, and Tom Tracer stepped aside and waited.

For ten minutes he stood there, eagerly waiting for a repetition of the sound and wondering where the light would flash up, and whose face it would reveal.

But the door did not open again, and at last, his patience exhausted, the detective moved on again.

With one hand on the wall to guide him he slipped round the dark room, but suddenly brought up against a couch.

A groan advised him that it was occupied, and he bent over it.

"Who's there?" was asked.

Tracer did not speak.

"Friend or foe?" queried the same voice.

"Friend."

"If friend, for heaven's sake don't stir. There's a trap where you stand. There is a door in the floor which opens by some infernal agency, and—"

The detective felt the floor sinking beneath his feet, and as he sprang back he was thrown downward and fell through dense blackness upon a hard floor some distance below!

He heard at the same time the wild cry of a human being; then all became still.

The trap had opened too quick for him, and, despite his agility, he had been dropped into its depths and was now in a dungeon into which came not a single ray of light.

The Train Spotter staggered to his feet and fell back against a wall.

The dimensions of the place he could not determine, until he could feel his way around it.

This he did, and soon returned to the spot where he had been thrown.

He ascertained the den to be doorless, windowless, and the abode of bats, which now and then brushed him with their wings.

Tracer had never been in such a place. Traps had caught him before, but not such a trap.

"Trapped!" he grated, "and it looks like a permanent abode—as dark as a tomb in the catacombs and as terrible. I can't find the semblance of a door, but the air that comes in here must come from overhead."

He drew from his pocket a match, and struck it on the dungeon wall.

The flame flashed up, and overhead in the wall, just out of reach, he beheld an opening a foot square, and through which the air seemed to come, for it stirred the flame of the tiny torch.

By its light the captured detective looked over his prison. He dimly saw the hinges of the trap door; saw the long webs which the opening of the trap had disturbed, and then the match went out.

Tracer went back to the wall and stood there in grim silence, but not in despair.

He was not that kind of a detective, but one to play any hand which fortune might send him.

So Tom began to surmise how thick the walls were, how far he was from the river, and where the bats came from.

All at once, as he cogitated, there came to his ears a sound which startled him. It was the whistle of a boat on the river!

To the alert Tracer this meant several things.

"I must be near the river," his thoughts ran. "Now, if I could only look out by means of the little window up there—"

He broke his own sentence by striking another match, and when he threw it down he made a running leap and seized the window sill.

He swung there for a little while, and then drew his body up.

At first only darkness confronted him; then he caught sight of a glimmering light; then of a moving figure.

But, light and figure were so small that they seemed miles away.

Tom still clung to the coping of the window. What should he do? What could he do? were the questions.

To creep through that little window looked impossible, but the detective began the struggle.

His fingers went to work on the edges of the window frame, which turned out to be plastering, and at last he made an impression.

The little pieces fell to the floor below, and Tom worked on until he had enlarged the opening a good deal.

Once or twice he dropped to the floor for breath and rest, for he could use but one hand at a time.

Minutes seemed hours, but he worked assiduously, until he at length determined to try the aperture.

To do this he dropped to the floor for rest, and to gather strength. Then threw off his outer garments.

It would, indeed, be a tight squeeze, but it was a struggle for life and freedom, and detective vengeance which it would be glorious to wreak on the criminals who would destroy him.

Once more he drew himself up to the enlarged hole; he pressed in head and shoulders over the sill, and then worked his body in.

It was a slow movement, and the air which came to him at intervals seemed laden with the odor of the wharves.

Along the air-shaft, as it evidently was, he worked his way, painfully, until soon he reached its end, and the detective leaned over what might be the bottomless pit; he could not see beneath him, and he could only surmise that the air-shaft he had followed led into some sort of an area behind the building's wall.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM DUNGEON TO DEATH.

Tom was in a quandary. What was below? If he jumped or dropped, would it not be to his destruction?

Would he break his limbs, and so suffer an agonizing death? If not that, would he not be discovered and be again immured in that rayless dungeon?

His last match was brought out, and he struck it along the ceiling to hold it over the open, and looked downward.

But the little light was too feeble to give him any encouragement, and a puff of wind put it out just when he thought he was getting a glimpse of the unknown beneath him.

He dropped a bit of plaster, and heard it strike the ground beneath.

He thought the distance was not great, and he resolved to risk the leap.

That decided, he at once lowered his body over the end of the air-shaft, which he had utilized, and hung in the dark for several seconds.

"Here goes!"

He had loosened his hand, and down he fell.

He struck earth quickly, and staggered to his feet a moment, only to fall headlong, stunned and dazed by the fall.

A moment he lay there, but quickly rallied and rose to his feet again, leaning against the wall.

"It's better than the dungeon," he said to himself. "It's better than waiting in the dark for one's executioner. I must try now to ascertain what's about me—where I am at, as the Congressman phrased it," and he smiled grimly at the allusion.

He started off, and found that he could grope his way down what appeared to be a narrow passage between heavy walls, or an abandoned corridor, or under-cover passage.

He pressed on, eager and vigilant, and curious. How would the passage end? Would he not be led into another trap as deadly as the one from which he had escaped?

Suddenly, however, he paused in the dense darkness, for an outburst of boisterous laughter came to his hearing.

It seemed so near that he fell back, and for a moment held his breath in trepidation.

"Open the trap, Jerry," was what he heard said. "Don't be a kitten."

"Wait till I get my breath. I didn't expect to carry the joke this far."

"Well, we've carried it here, and we've got to go to the end of the lane. Do you want the cops to break in and find us with the thing in our possession?"

"Not for the world."

"Then open the trap. I'll toss him down."

As hinges squeaked Tom Tracer drew back and looked up.

He was momentarily blinded by a flash of light; then something fell at his feet.

In another moment the trap was shut and darkness came again.

"That settles the matter," he heard exclaimed, overhead. "It's the end of the whole business, and now if you'll keep a still tongue in your head, why, we'll be all O. K."

"Trust me for that. Don't take me for a fool, Lark."

As silence once more came down over the dark scene in the noisome place Tom Tracer glided forward till his foot struck something on the ground, or floor, it might be, begrimed with dirt and debris.

He knew that a human body had been dropped at his feet, and from the haunt of some evildoers, which haunt was near at hand—in fact, above him but a few feet.

That some crime had been committed, and that he had witnessed the last act of it, was evident, and that proved that he was yet in the very heart of a thieves' and murderers' den.

Tracer's hand found a face which wore a bandage, and then he passed the investigating hand over the body and back again to the features.

The absence of a light prevented him from seeing what the victim looked like, but he found the smooth face of a man fairly advanced in years.

Tracer bent over the body, and touched the wrist to find if the pulse yet throbbed or was still in death.

It was still enough, and he listened in vain for the faintest beating of the heart. The man was dead; that he decided.

Tom would have given a good deal at that moment for a match.

Alone with the unknown dead in the dark, the Train Detective reflected as to the best course to pursue.

The voices of those overhead had ceased, and Tom could only use his

hands in an effort to discover the man's identity by something on his person.

He was stooping over the body, when, suddenly, the trap overhead opened again and a light blinded him.

Its blaze was flashed in his face, and beyond it he caught sight of the figures of three men.

Dark and scowling were the faces into which he looked, and as he caught sight of them they saw him, standing upright there in the dismal death dump!

"Gods! he lives!" cried a voice.

"No; it's another! Don't you see the man on the ground? Quick with the gun, Jerry!"

The dazed detective, with his hand on the butt of his own revolver, of which he had not been dispossessed, found himself covered by a cocked six-shooter while he stared up at the three human brutes, ready for more murder or evil doing.

"Don't! Fetch him up," cried one of the three, who had not spoken until then.

Then one of the dark faces was thrust into the opening and Tom Tracer was questioned:

"Are ye armed?"

"I am."

"Throw yer gun down!"

The detective did not relinquish his hold on his revolver, nor did he fall back.

"It's worth yer life, stranger, ter draw in that place," was the warning. "Yer in the grip o' death."

Tom could believe this without a stretch of the imagination, and prudently thrust the weapon in his hip-pocket again.

In another instant two arms from above reached down into the place, and he was seized by both shoulders.

"Now, haul away, Jerry!" ordered one of the ruffians. "Let's see what sort o' fish we've caught in the dump."

It required a good deal of strength to haul the detective up into the room above, but by hard tugging the pair succeeded in lifting him from the place, and he was held by them in the light of a gas jet.

Never before had he stood face to face with such a trio of wretches.

River thieves and wharf vermin he knew them to be, and that he had struck one of many haunts for such outlaws was only too evident.

He was walked half way across the room and thrust by force into a chair, at a rickety table.

Bottles and grimy glasses strewed the table, and there was a smell of foul liquor on the air.

But even that was not discouraging to the dauntless Tracer. He was out of the darkness, and that was something.

While one of the three stood near, a six-shooter in his hand, the other two keenly and curiously surveyed their prisoner.

Tom did not flinch, nor appear in the least disconcerted.

"How came you down thar?" demanded one of the three, the leader of the lot, apparently, as he pointed to the trap, closed once more.

"I was escaping from my enemies."

All three men laughed.

"Enemies, hey? Whar war they?"

The detective smiled as he answered:

"They were back at the end of the passage which lies above the chamber or tunnel down there."

The men exchanged looks.

They seemed to scent danger in the explicit answer.

"See here! You don't expect to git away from us, do you?" asked the burly leader.

"Why not? You fellows have no right to finish me for anything I have done to you?"

"Oh, haven't we? In this world man protects himself. Ef he don't, no one does it for him—not here in New York."

Tom Tracer knew what this signified.

"Such hunted men as we go by the old saying that dead men tell no tales. You have made a little discovery to-night, and just that seals your doom.

We can't let you go. You may be more than we know you to be—a man escaping from his enemies, even if your story is true. We can't afford to trust to experiment and good looks. You may be a spy or a tracker. We hate them. They have made life a burden to us."

Tracer, watched like a hawk by his captors, looked into the shiny eyes of the big speaker, but did not reply.

He knew one of the trio!

His red hair gave him away, and disclosed his identity, and the Train Detective was thinking rapidly.

"Red Rankin," thought he, "I know you. I haven't forgotten the wharf trail of last year, and then you thought you had me caged for good, but I beat you at your own game, and now you're alive to give me trouble once more, you vicious brute!"

Tom looked over to the man he had thus singled out, and their eyes met.

There was a start on the ruffian's part, and he came forward, but instantly fell back without speaking.

"Toss for the manner," suddenly cried the captain of the band. "We can't afford to keep this man here. Toss for the way. Throw the dice, Jerry."

Jerry's dark hands glided across the table and fished a dice box out from among the bottles there.

"One dice," continued the leader. "You know how, Jerry. Six for the cord, five for the dagger, four for the bludgeon, and three—"

Rankin came still a little closer to the detective.

His figure seemed to shake, and when Jerry raised the leathern dice box on high he uttered a cry which stopped it in midair.

"What is it, Reddy?" asked the captain. "Do you know him?"

Red Rankin laughed.

"Where have I seen those eyes?" he exclaimed. "What about that beard? You might pull it off, Jerry."

In another instant the hand of the chief ruffian was thrown out and the begrimed fingers twisted themselves in the detective's false beard.

One quick, villainous jerk was enough, and it came away from the face, the ruffian's triumph.

There was a cry from all three at this sudden unmasking, and the dice nearly fell from Jerry's hand.

"Look! I thought so!" cried Red Rankin. "I know him now."

The man reached out for the revolver in Larry's hand, but that person drew back.

"Who is he, Reddy?"

"It's Tom Tracer, the Spotter. It's the man who found me out last summer, and who got out of the little trap on the old third floor."

"It can't be."

"But it is," cried the other. "I'll give my life if it isn't Tom Tracer. You don't know him, Larry, but I do. And he knows me, eh?" And Reddy, with a malicious grin, leaned toward the watchful Spotter and almost touched his face.

"Then down with the dice! The sooner the better, Jerry!" This from Larry.

Thus startled again, Jerry gave the box a sudden whirl in midair, and its lone dice spun on the dingy table.

"What is it?" coolly asked Larry.

"Six," announced Jerry.

"Then it's the cord!"

At that instant the detective sprang up with the suddenness of a leaping panther.

To their amazement, the three human tigers saw him over against the door with a cocked revolver in his hand!

CHAPTER XXI.

BACK TO THE TRAIL.

For a moment at least the undaunted man, their prisoner, seemed the master of the situation.

The bound toward the door, the sudden whirl, and the uplifted six-shooter which stared the three in the face appeared to paralyze them.

The foremost fell back from the weapon, and all three, ranged side by side,

looked at the man who had asserted his powers.

The tenant of the chamber beneath the house had been drawn up to plague them, and the tables so suddenly turned promised to give them a great deal of trouble.

The tableau continued in silence for a full minute, when the leader of the trio said:

"Reddy calls you Tom Tracer. Is he right?"

"He ought to know."

"That's the same man," said Reddy, at this moment. "The old trap last year didn't hold him long, and when I went back to it three hours later it was empty."

The detective smiled.

"I haven't seen him since ter ask him how he got out of the nest, but he got out, I know."

"At least, I am here, Reddy."

Tom Tracer looked at the three, and seemed to catch a softening of the eyes before him.

He felt that the door behind him was locked, and that the key was in the pocket of one of the ruffians.

"Let's talk business," said Larry, the leader. "There needn't be any trouble between us, if you'll play fair."

"What do you call fair?"

"An oath—a vow taken upon pain of death not to reveal what you have seen to-night."

"You mean about the man under the floor?"

Larry nodded.

"It wasn't our work, Tom Tracer. We didn't finish the poor devil, that was done before we touched him. We found him on the pier and fetched him here. Hands up, boys, and swear to this."

"Why, then, my silence?"

"Because we don't want ter go ter the police. We don't want ter be brought up in court when we are on other business."

The detective's gaze for a moment wandered to the floor.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"We don't know."

"Bring him up."

"What, inter this room, and be liable ter have the cops come in on us?"

"You won't be disturbed. I'll vouch for that."

"But he's safe where he is, and they won't miss him."

"Very well. Then there will be no compromise."

The three exchanged looks, and Reddy Rankin was seen to nod approval.

Jerry moved toward the trap and lifted it.

The eye of the detective followed him, and for a moment doubted his purpose.

"Bring him up to the light," said Tom.

The three men, covered by the ferret's revolver, put ropes down and brought up the silent tenant of the underground tomb.

As the dead body was swung into the light the detective stepped forward and looked.

"You don't know him, Tom Tracer?" said Reddy. "We found him on the wharf and fetched him in."

"Alive?"

"There was breath in the body, but it didn't remain long. But on our lives we didn't kill him!"

"But you robbed him."

"We'll admit that."

"What had he?"

"A watch."

"Nothing more?"

"A ring and a few coins. It was almost a water haul."

The detective looked down into the face of the unknown, and while he gazed Larry repeated the declaration that they had not taken the man's life.

It might be thus, but he could not trust these rascals of the pier and the alleys.

Still he could not afford to fight them in order to carry a point which might ever remain another dark mystery of the city.

"You are willing to take the oath, aren't you?" suddenly asked Larry.

"For how long?"

"Forever!"

"And the man yonder?"

"Oh, we can get him back to the wharf or we can let the room down there keep him for all time."

"If you take him to the wharf I'll promise."

"We'll do that, eh, boys?"

The others nodded, and Larry stepped forward.

"Hands up," he said to the ferret, and Tom held up his right hand and took an oath not to betray the three men for their night's work.

"That's better than feeling the cord or killing all three o' us," smiled Larry, after the oath had been taken. "We don't part the best o' friends, but we part without bloodshed."

When the Train Spotter thought of the trail ahead he concluded that it was far preferable to a battle for existence with three such cool masters of crime and strategy.

"Let him out now, Jerry," said the captain of the wharf pirates. "Good-night, Mr. Tracer."

The door opened upon a scene of inky blackness, but the detective did not hesitate.

He looked once more at the villainous faces behind him, and crossed the threshold.

The door banged behind him, and he drew a long breath.

The thoughts of the crawl through the underground passage, the drop from the end of the tunnel, and his subsequent rescue by the three men, rushed across him mind again and sent a thrill through every nerve.

"Now, Mr. Slack," said he, with a light chuckle. "We will see who holds the last cards in this double game. We will see who lives in the house so well guarded and prepared for enemies. The man on the couch who warned me a second too late—I will see who he is."

Once more on the streets of Gotham the man of many trails started off.

He found the house in which he had met with his startling adventure in the dark, and passed it with a keen look.

The shutters were as tightly drawn as before, and he could not catch the faintest glimmer of light, but he did not doubt that it was still tenanted by the same people.

Was Abel Marks, the missing banker, there? Was the nabob of Wall Street a captive in the house, as he had been in the dwelling behind the cedars at Woodsdale? Ah, if he only knew he could work with some assurance of success.

He did not stop to investigate just then, but passed on and dodged into a little alley some distance away.

In a short time he came out at the other end of the unfrequented thoroughfare, and dashed up a flight of steps, to knock at a door near the head of the landing.

The person who opened this door fell back with a slight start, but held the portal open and stared at the detective.

"Mr. Jasper?" said the spotter.

"That's my name."

"You are head bookkeeper in the house of Marks & Jenkins, bankers, on Wall Street?"

A slight pallor came to the young man's face, and he gave his questioner a sharp look.

"You seem to know me," was all he said.

"A good many people know you, Mr. Jasper. You haven't had much to do during the last several days?"

"No, sir. Owing to the vanishment of Mr. Marks and the indisposition of Mr. Jenks, I have not been at my desk."

Tom Tracer looked around the room and saw that it was plainly furnished.

He noticed, too, an odor of rich smoke in the room, and a pipe lying on the table told that the bookkeeper sometimes indulged in the pleasures of nicotine.

"You have heard nothing of Mr.

Marks?" he said, turning suddenly to the bookkeeper.

The young man shook his head.

"What do you think?"

"I hardly know," was the reply. "Sometimes I fear foul play, then again I imagine that he has extended his trip and will turn up all right in a few days."

"How long have you been with the firm?"

"Three years."

"You know a good deal about the partners?"

"No more than one learns in an ordinary business manner."

"You know their habits, eh, Mr. Jasper?"

The young man flushed.

"That's not in the scope of my avocation," said he, with a faint smile.

"I know; but you haven't been idle outside the office."

"Pray, what do you mean?"

"You know that Jarold Jenks has a boy."

"Oh, Prince Bullion!"

"Yes."

"You've met him outside the office and after business hours?"

"Occasionally. Accident has thrown us together, but I don't pretend to be the young fellow's chum."

"No? Well, Mr. Jasper, while you are not his chum, you know that he is an expensive appendage to the house of Jenks."

"Rather costly."

"Does he ever look over the books?"

"Never!" With another start.

"Who does besides yourself?"

"A young accountant named Flint. He is called in now and then as an expert to see if there's a tangle anywhere along the line."

"Well, how much of a tangle is there?"

This was a shot fairly from the box, and the young man who faced Tracer seemed to recoil.

"Come, Mr. Jasper. This is wholly between us. How much is missing?"

"I should say a great deal."

"And you have hid it? You haven't told the head of the house?"

"Heavens, no! I dared not do that."

"Because the villainy was too near the fountain-head?"

"Partly so," evasively answered Jasper.

For half a second the detective was silent. Then he left his chair and came over to the young man.

"Now, Mr. Jasper, which one of them did it, Marks or Jenks?" he asked.

"It was Jarold Jenks," was the startling answer.

Jasper, the accountant, seemed to cower in his chair as he answered the question.

His face grew white, and he seemed to upbraid himself for the reply he had given.

But Tom Tracer was not at the end of the inquisition.

He still eyed the bookkeeper and stood at his side.

"You are sure it was Jenks?"

"I—I am; but for Heaven's sake—"

"He'll never upbraid you for this betrayal," smiled the ferret. "Jarold Jenks will never call you to account, and he won't care what they do with the books. Only tell me the truth, Jasper. You knew all the time that this thing was going on. You knew that Abel Marks was in the dark concerning it. Now, what has this got to do with the vanishment of the senior partner?"

"Nothing."

"Come, sir," sternly said the Train Spotter. "You can't afford to play a criminal hand, you, of all young men in New York. There is murder at one end of the line, and theft at the other. Jarold Jenks paid you for silence."

"He paid me; of course he did. He had to do it, but I'll hand it back. Only don't take me away from here."

A little smile came to the detective's face, and he knew he had picked up another clew.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TERRIBLE TRUTH.

Captain Sleek, once more in his own true colors, was alone in a neatly furnished room some distance from the scene of the last chapter.

If one could have penetrated to his presence he might have noticed that the curtains were tightly drawn and the doors closed.

There was nothing of the hunted man about this cool-head, but at the same time, whenever a footstep passed the house, he listened till it got out of hearing.

Presently there came up the steps beyond the door a step which caused him to lean forward and listen to the bell.

But there was no bell to tinkle at that hour, or, if it still remained in place, it had been "doctored" by the hand of Captain Sleek.

There came toward the door of the room footfalls, which ended at the portal, and the following moment it was opened.

Blair Jenks, or Prince Bullion, stood before the captain.

There was a whiteness about the youth's mouth, and his eyes sought out the plotter in the middle of the room.

"What's happened?" asked Captain Sleek, eyeing the banker's son keenly.

"What hasn't happened? It's something when a fellow is arrested for murder, isn't it?"

"Arrested for murder? Come, what joke is this?" cried the captain.

The young man dropped into a chair across from the other and continued:

"There's a mad detective on the force, it seems—a chap named Waters—who appears to have got the idea that he has to arrest everybody till he accidentally finds the person who killed the young woman on M— Avenue."

"That's a queer notion," said Captain Sleek.

"Well, I happened to fall into his clutches, and I got a look at the interior of a cell at the station house."

"You did?"

"And I had some trouble proving that I was not a red-handed assassin."

"But you were lucky," laughed Captain Sleek, falling a little deeper into the luxurious chair. "It's not everybody nowadays who can escape so well from the hands of the police."

"They had to take my statement as against this madman's," Blair went on. "But for a level-headed inspector, I suppose I would have been brought to trial for murder, and perhaps hanged. It wasn't the most pleasant experience in a man's life, and I'm not over it yet."

"Didn't any one come to your rescue?"

"Not a soul. I was visited by a white-bearded man, who took a good look at me, and then walked away coolly after offering me no help. I had to help myself out, and my family connections," here he smiled, "stood me in good stead. It was a mere chance, though. I escaped by the skin of my teeth."

"Let me congratulate you," said Captain Sleek, holding out his hand, which Blair took.

"Well, I'm glad I'm out of it. Don't want another experience of that kind. But I tell you I'm in a worry."

"Over that arrest? The newspapers will explain all that, and give you a good advertisement."

"It's not that. I wish it was nothing more. But I'm in a terrible fix. You know my father?"

"I've seen him."

"He has lost his mind."

"Not so bad as all that."

"Yes. My father has vanished."

"Like Abel Marks?"

"Not exactly that way. But let me stop here. It's a family matter, and I don't feel able to go over it."

"Just as you like, Blair," said Captain Sleek. "It's all one to me, however. If I knew, I might offer a suggestion or help you out of the shadow. But don't confide anything to me if you think I'm not able to keep the matter."

"It's not that—it's the terrible aspect of

the case. It's the hideous revelation—the story he told in one of his outbursts of lunacy; yes, it must have been told in that state."

Blair Jenks, who had left his chair, was pacing the room, but all at once he stopped in front of Captain Sleek.

"Did you ever know Diamond Dess?" he asked.

There was a quick start on the captain's part, but the next moment his hand crossed the table and picked up a cigar, which he coolly lighted.

"You may have met the woman, as you run in all kinds of society," continued Blair. "She is the girl who was murdered on M— Avenue. That is the crime which has turned Detective Waters's head."

"I've heard of the case."

"That girl has drifted into my life. She has strangely entered my existence, and though dead and under ground, now, she has blighted my career for all time to come."

"How so, boy?"

"It's a part of the revelation that fell from Jarold Jenks' lips."

Captain Sleek hid his handsome face in a cloud of smoke, which drifted away to show it once more to the banker's heir.

Blair Jenks came back to the chair and sat down.

"If you knew her, if you ever saw her, tell me, had she any of his ways?" he asked.

"Any of whose ways?"

"Jarold Jenks'. It's a strange question, I know, and you may think me demented for asking it, but it comes up in my mind a thousand times a second, and I can't keep it down."

"A regular Banquo's ghost, eh?" grinned the captain.

"A thousand times worse than that," cried Blair. "But let me press the query. If you knew the unfortunate girl, did she have any of his ways?"

"I knew her but passingly. It was a mere summer acquaintance; it was nothing."

"I have heard—"

Prince Bullion paused, and caught the keen eyes of Captain Sleek looking him through and through.

"What have you heard?" demanded the captain.

"Pardon me, but one hears a good deal of chatter at the club," said Blair. "It comes and goes for the most part, and isn't called very reliable; but I heard that you used to visit her."

"Diamond Dess?"

"Yes, yes. I certainly heard that at the Club, but not until after the crime."

Captain Sleek's gaze fell, but he suddenly lifted it and once more transfixed his visitor with his clear, cold eyes.

"One hears a good deal of 'stuff' at the Club," he said. "But for once, boy, you heard a bit of true gossip."

Blair's eyes brightened.

"You did know her, then?"

"Yes."

"Well enough to call on her?"

"I even went that far."

"Then you can answer my question. Did she look like Jarold Jenks, or did she have any of his ways?"

"It's a funny question. I suppose this was also learned at the Club."

"No. It came from his lips in the terrible revelation which sent the blood singing through my head. What was she like in life?"

"She was a pretty girl as girls go nowadays; but she was self-willed and imperious."

"Like Jarold Jenks!"

"She could deceive with the archness of the arch deceiver, and could play a hand so deceptively cunning that you would think her the pink of honor."

"You must have studied her carefully," cried Blair Jenks, astonished at the analysis.

"A passing study, nothing more," was the reply. "But this interest of yours mystifies me."

"It horrifies me," answered the na-

bob's heir. "I can't find my father to force the truth from him. I have forced it in part from Martha Jenks—"

"Your mother, boy?"

"I call her Martha Jenks now," said Blair.

Captain Sleek turned his chair slightly from his visitor, and for a moment seemed to study a certain spot on the wall opposite.

"The man who killed her may have known the truth," the young man suddenly proceeded.

"Perhaps he did."

"If I could find him I would make him tell me all or I would avenge the death of the woman who, dead, has come between me and my future."

"You begin to talk like a madman. You have imagined something too horrible to have a semblance of truth. You will quite lose your head by and by."

"It's nearly lost now," cried Blair Jenks. "What have I got ahead if all this is true? What am I but a nameless offspring, a substitution, the victim of a plot as dark as midnight. It's an old crime. It took place years ago, but I am reaping the harvest of folly and the whirlwind of sin. You have seen the dead woman. You have answered me evasively. I would like to press you further, but I dare not."

"Go on," coolly said Captain Sleek.

"No, no!" Blair Jenks sprang up and seemed to grow into a statue of whiteness on the flowered carpet. "I cannot. I might have it all confirmed. I will go out and find him. I will make him tell me the truth about my parents. I'm glad some hand struck that woman down. I would go and do it myself if she lived to-day."

"Why, boy?"

"She was Jarold Jenks' daughter!"

"Come. Nonsense!" cried Captain Sleek, but at the same time a shadow of doubt seemed to cross his face.

"That's the story. There! It's out at last. I am an outcast, a man without a name. They wanted a male child, but their offspring was a daughter, and a nurse played the hand for money. I am the child she substituted. Diamond Dess was the real heir. It is enough to drive me mad."

The man in the chair looked up at his visitor and seemed to smile.

"You sent for me," said Blair, coming up to the table. "What do you want? I got your letter at the club, and that's why I'm here."

"Sit down. You brought up this other matter, and we've almost ignored the real object of this meeting. However, we'll come to it now."

"I'm ready to listen. Go on."

"I wanted to tell you that the gold mine you purchased is a great fraud," slowly said Captain Sleek.

There was no change of color in Blair Jenks' face.

"Those men swindled you nicely, and instead of a paying mine you have to-day a hole in the ground that wouldn't build a hut in Shantytown."

Blair Jenks suddenly laughed.

"I don't see that they got the best of me after all. The check I gave them was worthless."

"How worthless? Your father's checks are as good as gold in this city."

"Not now."

Captain Sleek's face lost color.

"I don't see why. It was given the other day, and they've cashed it before this."

"It hasn't been cashed; but, really, it wasn't worth the paper it was written on."

"You are mistaken. That check for twenty thousand dollars is worth every penny of it."

"Let me confess the terrible truth," and Blair leaned toward Captain Sleek. "Jarold Jenks was a robber. He stripped the firm of every available penny, and when he signed that check he knew that it would never be paid. That's why he got me to delay giving it up for a day or two. Alive or dead to-night, Jarold Jenks isn't worth a dollar!"

All color fled from Captain Sleek's cheeks, and he seemed to fall back in his chair.

Prince Bullion, in after days, recoiled at that look of horror and chagrin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD GENERAL HAS AN ADVENTURE.

Tom Tracer rang a bell at a door on M— Avenue, and the portal was opened by his old friend the general.

It was after the detective's interview with Jasper, the accountant, and he had gone direct to the place just mentioned.

The old man started a little when he saw who stood on the step, but he quickly recovered and escorted his caller into the snug little parlor.

Tracer took the chair which the general pushed forward and looked at his friend.

"What have you seen lately?" he asked.

"But little. Everything is quiet across the street, and nothing of note has happened there lately."

"No callers?"

"None. I have seen no one enter the place for several days but the officers, and they don't remain long."

For another minute Tom Tracer sat silent, and then he leaned toward the old man.

"General," said he, as his eyes seemed to transfix the recluse. "What do you know of Jarold Jenks' past life?"

There was an unmistakable start on the listener's part, and the color left his face.

"That's a queer question, Tom," said he.

"But you knew him?"

"I did."

"You knew him before he went into business in Wall Street?"

"Yes."

"You knew him in his younger days, and before he was married?"

"Perhaps; but I don't see why you recall these things."

The ferret smiled.

"It's all for a purpose, General," said he. "You want to know why I recall them? Because he is dead."

The old man almost sprang from his chair, and it was with great difficulty that he held himself down.

"Dead?" cried he.

"Dead, and the woman who did him a favor long ago was in the house with him when he died."

"And his wife—"

"He didn't die at home. He died by his own hand in a distant house in this city, and she was with him."

"Sara Shook?"

"Is that her name, General?"

"It is. She was the hospital nurse."

"But that was long ago?"

"Years and years ago, and ever since she has been living on Jarold Jenks' bounty."

"You mean she had a hold on him?"

"She had."

"What was the secret? You know, General."

There was no reply, and the old man for a little looked strangely into the detective's face, and appeared to shiver.

"I can't disclose that. Go to Sara Shook and ask her," he said.

"She will seal her lips and play sphinx to perfection. I have come to you for this secret of the trail. I am here to listen to the story of the past."

"Because you think it will reveal the motive for the crime across the street,"

"Partly so, and partly because it will give me another clew. It will clear up a dark place in the other trail—in the hunt for Abel Marks."

"His partner? Another strange old man," said the General. "If you will let me off, Tom, I will promise to tell you all another time."

"How much time do you want?"

"Give me till to-morrow."

The detective thought a moment.

"You shall have the time," said he.

"I will be here in the morning ready for the secret."

"It shall then be yours."

As the detective gazed into the General's face he seemed to see a light of joy there, and in a short time he stood once more on the steps.

He glanced across the street, and saw that the house of the crime was dark and the shutters tightly drawn.

He did not cross, but walked away, and a minute later was on his way down town.

As for the General, he remained a while silent in his chair, and then leaped up with a cry.

"I must go through it carefully," said he. "I must see if she did leave anything behind."

He pulled his hat over his brows and turned up his collar, then he slipped into the hall and cautiously peered out.

Tom Tracer was out of sight, and the old man glided across the street and up the steps of the house of the dark deed.

He opened the door with a key which he took from his pocket, and locked it again when he had passed inside.

In the parlor he turned on the gas, but dimly, still enough to see, and passed into Diamond Dess' bedroom.

It was a cosy place, luxuriously furnished, and one which the eye of the detective had already searched.

The General looked keenly around, and went over to the desk in one corner.

The man-hunters, in their eagerness for clues, had broken the lock of this desk, and he had no trouble in lifting it.

It did not reveal any secret to the old man, and he looked all over the chamber to quit it reluctantly, and at last to re-enter the parlor and sit down.

"She told me once that she had the papers, and she said she had the whole thing written out in case of need," he said, in low tones. "Now that she's under the ground, and the trail dogs of the city are after human prey, why can't I find them?"

He sprang up and dashed from the room.

He climbed the stairs in the hall, and on the second floor of the house stopped in a small chamber which had a musty odor.

This time he left the door open.

The old General was busily engaged in searching this room, when he turned suddenly toward the door, and stood transfixed, as if he confronted a ghost.

In the cramped hallway outside stood a man with a dark, sinister face, and the old man looked into deep-set eyes over the barrel of a levelled revolver.

For half a minute the two looked at one another, and then the General was the first to speak.

"What is it?" said he. "Who are you, that you come here and thus face me?"

The other laughed.

"I don't have to ask you who you are," he said. "I know. You are here like a thief in the night, and your hands have searched the house."

"I have been looking for something which the dead girl may have concealed somewhere."

"Why, the man-hunters have done all that before you."

"They've been here. They've looked all over the place, and have gone off. I know all that. But what have they found?"

"Go and ask them. You have been more fortunate."

"I?"

"You just put something in your pocket."

The General fell back aghast.

"It's in the pocket on the right side. You took it from beneath the carpet at the foot of the bed."

What could the old searcher say?

What little color that remained on his face fled, and he looked again at the cool head before him.

"What is it?" queried the man.

"Only a few papers."

"Papers that she left? Let me have them."

"I can't do that."

"Come, you don't want me to take them from a dead man?" laughed the

other. "I am here for what you have just concealed in your pocket, and unless they are laid on the table yonder within ten seconds I will proceed to take them from a corpse."

There was no mercy in the voice that fell upon the General's ears.

The other one did not move, having firmly planted himself in the door with the revolver in an unshaking hand.

"Five seconds more," he said, sternly.

Biting his lips, the General dived one hand into the inner pocket, and drew out the package of papers.

He placed them on the little table at his left and slowly lifted his gaze to his enemy.

One hand reached out and seized the papers, and the other slowly lowered the six-shooter.

"That's better than serving the coroner," the stranger grinned. "It's better than dying in this already famous place. Come; we'll go down till I take a look at the documents."

They went to the parlor, and the General was waved to a chair while the other one stood at the table.

He went to work on the papers, which he opened by cutting the string with which they were tied, and they fell out on the cloth.

The old man eyed him closely, and seemed to wonder what he would say to the contents of the sheets before him.

He leaned over the cloth and picked up the sheets, which he placed together so as to read them in proper order.

"They're all here, I guess," he said, with a quick, upward glance.

"She wrote out the narrative."

"How do you know? Did you know there were such papers in this house?"

"I suspected it."

"You knew her, then?"

The General smiled.

"You came over here to search the house? You wanted to find this package of papers?"

"Frankly, I did."

"And, having found them, you would turn them over to the police."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because they don't concern the police."

"No? Do you know what these papers contain?"

"I could guess."

The stranger did not press the query that seemed to come to his lips, and the old man continued to watch him from the chair at the table.

Suddenly the strange one uttered a cry, and the documents fell from his hand and lay on the cloth.

He did not speak, but his gaze slowly wandered to the General, and rested on his white face.

"It's all over," said he, and then he swept the sheets together, and bunched them quickly.

Holding them in his left hand, he struck a match with the right, and held the papers near the blaze.

The General started up with a sharp cry, but the stranger drove him to a halt with a look.

"Not a step!" said he. "Stand where you are!"

"But the papers! You must not destroy them! You don't know what you do."

"Don't I? Hands off!"

He thrust the papers into the fire and watched them burn.

The old man trembled in the middle of the floor, and his face got red and white by turns.

"I'll hand you over to the police," cried the General.

"You will, eh?" laughed the other.

"I'll see you swing."

"For making a bonfire of a few papers left by a dead girl? I would like to see a man hang for that."

The burning went on, and when the last bit of paper fell blackened from the villain's hand, he turned triumphantly upon his companion.

"Now, sir, go to the police with the story. It is your story. But be care-

ful how you tell the tale of this night's adventure. You will be in the shadow of death, old man, and the moment the dogs turn to my trail, that moment your life goes out like the extinguishing of a rush-light."

The next moment the General was the only tenant of the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF A CHILD.

Back once more to the house in which he had met with the startling adventure in the cellar the train detective went, to find it as silent and grim as ever, but he fell to watching it from a convenient point, and in a little while saw a girl trip up the steps and fit a key into the lock.

The train spotter swooped down upon the child.

"Wait a minute, little one," he ordered "Who lives here?"

"I do."

"How long have you lived here, little one?"

"Just began to-day. Mamma and I are taking care of the sick man. He is very sick. You can't see him, sir."

"I'll see your mother, at any rate," and the detective pushed the door open and stood in the hall, still holding the child's arm.

"Ruby, is that you?" cried a voice beyond the hall.

The child answered and moved forward.

"Who's with you, Ruby?"

"A gentleman who met me on the step."

A door opened to show Tom Tracer a sharp-faced woman of forty, in the light.

"Where is he, madam—the sick man?" asked Tom, springing forward.

"You're a second too late. My patient's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Tracer. "You let him out, didn't you?"

"I did nothing of the kind. He heard some one in the hall, and in another instant he was out of the house."

"But Ruby here said he was very sick."

"It was all a sham. It's a pretty trick Sammy Slack played on us," laughed the woman.

"It's all a huge joke, I guess," she went on to explain. "Sammy's been away, but to-day he turned up in our house and asked me to take care of a sick man in this house. We came here, Ruby and I, and found the patient in the room yonder on a couch. He looked very weak, and could barely whisper. Sammy promised us good pay if we would take care of him ten days, or until he died, and I thought I couldn't do better than take the job."

The woman led the detective into the room, where they found a tumbled bed and disordered covers.

"Maybe he went below," said the detective, pointing at the floor at the foot of the couch.

"There's no way to the cellar from this room."

"Aye, but there is, for I've tried it," and Tom tried to find the secret spring of the trap, but in vain.

"He went out the back way. I saw him quit the couch, and he was as nimble as an acrobat."

Tracer was baffled, but had now struck a new lead, he felt sure.

"As you seem to be familiar with Sammy, can you tell me where he is now?"

She shook her head.

"Has he any other haunts in the city?"

"I can't say."

"Why, mother, there's the nice fine house to which I once took a note for him," put in the child.

Tom Tracer saw the woman's flush, and glanced thankfully at the child.

"Sammy has another house, but you won't find him there, I think," the woman admitted. "It is No. 566 O—street."

"Quite a nice neighborhood. Does he room with the handsome young fellow

who can dress good enough for both of them? You know him, madam."

The woman did not speak.

"That's the sort o' man who gave me the note that day," and once more the child spoke to her mother's discomfiture. "He was a nice man and no mistake, for he rewarded me, you recollect, mamma."

"Come," said the detective, "the child betrays you. You know that Slack lives with his friend, and perhaps upon the latter's bounty. Speak candidly. You can trust me."

"Sammy Slack is not Sammy Slack at all," averred the woman, a little more at her ease. "He is quite another person, but of late he has been Sammy Slack. His friend is known as Captain Sleek. It's a name he's fairly and honestly won, and—"

"Wait a moment," interrupted the ferret. "I am a detective, and must ask you to come with me."

"What, to the station?" almost shrieked the woman, falling against the wall. "Never! I have been there once in my life, and I won't go again. Oh! I want to break away from Sammy Slack, for sooner or later all who have dealings with him get into the fire. I don't want to singe my garments, for Ruby's sake."

She pushed the child away hurriedly, and the little one left the room with a scared look.

"Now," continued the woman, "I'll say this: Sammy Slack and Captain Sleek have been old friends for years. See one and look for the other's shadow. Sammy has been 'up the river,' but not under his true name. Captain Sleek is too slick for the police, and he has never been behind the bars. He is too cool for the best of them. Oh, I tell you, they are a precious pair, Slack and Sleek are, and I can't contrive what sort o' scheme they've got on hand now. The sick man is gone, or he might have explained. What's up, anyhow? What is Sammy wanted for?"

"For murder, madam!"

"Oh, heavens—no! It can't be! Sammy wouldn't go that far! I know the man too well. You will never mark that crime against Sammy's name. I can't say as much for his partner, though. I'll call the child in, and she'll tell all she knows about that man. Maybe it will help Sammy," and, opening the door, the mother called her little daughter.

The child quickly appeared, and with a white face, as if now frightened.

"Ruby was in the fine house on O—street," said the woman. "She once took a note there for Sammy Slack, now two weeks ago."

"From whom did you carry the note, child?" asked Tom.

"From the nice-looking man who met me on the street. He told me that he knew mamma, and asked me if I could find O—street and the nice house."

"And you found both?"

"Yes."

"Did Sammy reply to the note?"

"Why, he gave me a box, a little box, to take back to the nice gentleman who waited for me in a clubhouse."

"And you took it direct to the nice man—to Captain Sleek?"

"I did, but I met with an accident on the way. It was a funny accident. I tripped and fell on the sidewalk."

"But you held on to the box, child?"

"I let it slip out of my hands, but only for a second. I got it again and put on the lid again."

"Oh, you broke the lid, did you?"

"Yes, sir, and I expected to catch it from Captain Sleek. I had to story to him when I delivered the box."

"You told him that you didn't open the box, did you, Ruby?"

"That's it exactly. I did see into the little box, but I didn't lift it out."

"What was in the box, child?"

Ruby glanced at her mother.

"Tell him, child; tell him all."

"It was a little black-handled dagger," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

FOUND.

These revelations of little Ruby started Tracer for the room of the despondent Waters.

He found that person in, and the moment Waters espied his friend he cried:

"You have news? You have found the man?"

"Not yet, Waters. I have come to ask you about the dagger which you found under the carpet on the stair in the house on M—avenue. Tell me minutely about it."

Waters at once gave Tom a full description of the dagger.

"That is the one," averred the Tracer.

"You have seen it?"

"I have not, but a little child—little Ruby—has."

"Little Ruby?" he repeated. "Must we drag a child into this man-hunt?" he asked, regretfully.

"Yes, even a child and her mother, in order to get at the truth."

Tracer went back to the trail, turning his steps almost unconsciously towards Wall street.

The hour was late, and the silent guardians of the city's gold street stood like statues in the dim light, or shielded their figures in the dark shadows of the tall buildings.

Proceeding down the street, he at length stood opposite the building occupied by Marks & Jenks.

Hardly had he paused there when there came out of the shadows near by a shuffling figure, which approached the doorway of the building.

Tracer stepped back into an overshadowing doorway and watched.

Straight to the door proceeded the night visitor, and at once he inserted a key in the lock.

The outer door swung open, and the man paused for a moment in the hall from which opened the door of the banking house.

Half a minute later the outer door closed, and the detective knew that the person, whoever he was, had passed on into the banking room.

Not a sound came from the place.

The Tracer from where he stood could see nothing moving, and all he could do was to stand there and wait until the unknown came out again.

He heard the tread of the policeman on that beat as he passed the place, never thinking to try the door of the banking house, which during the past week had gained a new and startling reputation.

Finally there came from within the watched room a strange cry—very like a groan, a deep groan of dismay, and it seemed to end abruptly, as if the person had fallen to the floor, suddenly struck down.

The detective waited for more, but nothing more was heard, and he was about to leave his cover opposite when the outer door once more opened, and the man who had gone in came out; the street door was locked up again, and the man started down the walk.

He did not get far, for the hand of Tracer fell upon his arm.

There was a cry and a start, but the man did not speak, and his face told of the agony and terror at his heart.

"Shall we go back, Mr. Marks?" asked the shadower. "We cannot be seen from the street, and I want to interview you. That is what I am here for now."

The frightened man's answer was to hand Tracer two keys.

They returned to the outer door, which soon swung open again, and Tracer himself led the way into the bank.

The curtains at the front windows were down, and the private room was quite dark, but, pushing past the ferret, Marks led the way to it.

"This is the best place for us," the banker now spoke, in an unnatural voice, and seated himself in the revolving chair of his own private desk, and turned on the electric globe light over the desk, but shading it with his handkerchief to a low glow.

"I have come back," he then remarked, "like a thief in the night, and you have shadowed me."

"You've given us a long chase, Mr. Marks, yet you haven't been very far. Ever since the night you went away with Sammy Slack you have caused no end of talk, but, now that you're back again, all this mystery will be cleared up, I hope."

"I don't want you to betray me—not yet, at any rate," said he; "I am not in a state of mind to be found just yet."

"But you want to let your child know that you're safe, don't you? You don't want to torture Nora longer?"

"I don't, but I must. I want to walk from this room to a hiding place somewhere they won't find me."

"Where who won't find you?" queried the detective. "You took risks in coming down town to-night, Mr. Marks."

"I couldn't keep back. All the powers on earth couldn't have mastered my will to-night. I wanted to see if everything was safe here. I had to come. But, I wish I hadn't. Yes, I wish I hadn't."

He paused a moment.

"Where's Jenks? What does he think of my vanishment?" he at length asked.

"He doesn't think about it; he's dead!" informed the shadower.

Marks sprang up, but the next moment dropped limp and helpless into the chair.

"Dead? My partner dead? I wonder if he discovered the robbery? Did he know that they had ruined us? Did that cause his death? Tell me that!"

"You must find out through the woman who waited on him to the last. Sara Shook, the old nurse."

"You've been up to Woodsdale looking for the trail, have you?"

"Yes; I went thither and found it. You were decoyed from the city that night, I concluded."

"By Sammy? Yes. It's a strange story. He worked the scheme from Albany. It was a bright one—a deep-laid plot to get me out of town into the hands of the pair of villains. Fool that I am, I fell into the trap, and while I was in their hands they robbed us."

"But the books will show that some one else may have had a hand in the fleeing," quietly intimated Tracer.

"Where is Flint? He can point out the false entries; the two villains never had access to the books. Flint and Jasper had, and they can tell if I am a ruined man or have enough left to keep my child from the poorhouse."

"We shall see to that, all in due time, Mr. Marks. But now about Jarold Jenks: You have long been friends?"

"For years. We were boys together, but Jenks wanted the secret kept, and I have obliged him. He was the pink of honesty, but at times a little given to speculation."

"His son—"

"The Prince?" cried Abel Marks. "There's a blade for you, sir! Give him string and he will run into the river with the bit of foolishness in his mouth. I told Jenks more than once to curb his son, but he let him go. Once he said: 'He's got none of my blood in his veins,' and laughed at his own words."

Tracer made no remark, and the banker kept on:

"In Woodsdale I was not permitted to see the sun. It was a prison—the house among the cedars—and they wouldn't let me tell the world that I was in the land of the living. Sammy Slack played his hand pretty well, but when he brought me back to the city and took me to the little house from which I have lately escaped I felt that the game was nearly played out."

"What about the other one?"

"I saw but little of him. Sammy was the jailer and the other one only dropped in now and then."

"But the motive, Mr. Marks?"

"I signed a paper for the little man, promising to pay five thousand dollars for my release—"

"But when he presented it to your daughter it turned out to be an order for those papers left in your desk."

The stare that came into Abel's face, even in the dim light of the private room, was noticeable.

"Those papers? Did I leave them in the desk? I remember now. How did they know they were there?"

"I cannot tell. Captain Sleek got them. Were they important, Mr. Marks?"

"They told the story of my life."

"A poor place to keep papers of that kind," remarked the Tracer.

"I know it, but Nora never suspected they were there. If I had not been decoyed that night they would have been safe, for I should have burned them."

"You were too late, Mr. Marks. They fell into the hands of Sammy Slack's partner."

"Then I am in the jaws of the lion," and Abel Marks struck the desk with his clinched hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HEADLESS EFFIGY.

"Decoyed from home, robbed during my absence, plundered and ruined and God knows what else," Marks went on, "I must find a hiding place, but where? I cannot escape these villains. You must let me go. You must not stand between Abel Marks and his fate."

Tracer's hand was on the half-frenzied man's shoulder.

"You must go home to your child, who yet clings to you."

"Yet?" cried Marks. "Why should she? What if Sammy Slack's partner comes to her with the story of those papers?"

"But he won't. I'll see to that!"

Marks was incredulous.

"You may be shrewd and cunning, but you are no match for Sammy Slack and his friend."

The detective laughed.

"If you will go home—if you will trust Nora, all will be well."

"They'll find me there. I'm ruined, at any rate, so why not let them take the girl?"

"You don't mean that you will give Nora up for their silence?"

Abel Mark's looks fell.

"Come," and the hand of Tracer tightened. "It is one of two places for you—the police station or home. Take your choice."

"In God's name, man, on what charge could you have me locked up to-night?" he cried.

"On the old one—you know?"

"Then let it be home."

Tracer looked across the room, and his gaze settled on a little safe set deftly in the wall.

"You keep some things in there, don't you?" said he.

"That is Jarold's safe. It is private. He had it set in there last summer, and I never looked into it."

"It is now the safe of the dead, and might give me a clew to the self-inflicted crime."

"How self-inflicted?"

"Your partner grew tired of life, and helped himself across the river in Sara Shook's house."

"Is that true? Then," cried Marks, springing up, "then I am under no obligation to let that little treasure box remain unlocked."

Removing the handkerchief from the globe, he started across the room and reached upon a shelf which ran to one corner.

"I saw Jarold put something here the other day, and— Yes, it is the key to the safe yonder in the wall!"

Tracer took this key and opened the safe.

Both men leaned forward.

"It is crammed with something," cried Marks. "See! they are securities. By Jove! these are some of the papers which should have been in the large safe over there!"

The banker pulled out package after package and looked at them.

"It can't be," the banker cried. "It can't be that Jarold would do this—the old Jarold of my boyhood. But, these are the papers which I missed from the

safe, and which tore a groan from my heart that I couldn't repress."

The little safe was further explored, and more securities found, and bills and bonds.

"It is true! Robbed, and by him!" he cried, the last package falling from his nerveless hands. "It is good he's dead! Jarold Jenks, you won't know how I receive this evidence of your betrayal. Curse the wild oats of Prince Bullion! He drove you to this, Jarold. He is the real cause of this robbery, I well enough know."

Marks replaced the securities and other papers in the wall safe, and transferred the key to his own pocket.

"I'm ready now," he announced. "Take me home, but keep the wolves away a while longer. Don't let the city know that I'm back. Let it wonder what has become of Abel Marks. Should New-York discover me the two plotters would find me, as well."

Half an hour later Nora Marks stood face to face with one who came back to her like one from the dead.

If Tracer had turned his steps toward the quarters where he once lodged he might have witnessed a strange and startling episode—might have seen the man who, slipping down Broadway under the flaring electric lights, turned suddenly aside and ran up the steps which led to his room.

In that room he had left the effigy of himself, after the attempt upon his life.

Resting on the table, as though it had fallen after the shot with the silent powder, lay the counterfeit of himself, waiting, as it were, for the terrible discovery that would reveal another crime.

Toward this door the man went, eagerness in his looks and agility in his movement.

Reaching up, he caught the cross-piece of the door and nimbly pulled his figure up to the transom.

The room within was not lit up, but the gas-light through the nearest window revealed the well-arranged figure at the table.

"It's queer," muttered the man. "Not discovered yet? Surely—"

He dropped to the floor, breaking his own sentence, and then he began deftly to unlock the door by means of a bit of steel.

For a few minutes he worked; then the door was pressed open, and into the room he stepped.

"Cheated by an effigy!" that was his exclamation as he surveyed the cheat with a rage that could find no expression in words.

But the fellow was not wholly disconcerted. He replaced the now disarranged dummy, taking care to make everything look as it had when he entered.

"They won't know that I've been here," he muttered. "If he comes back he will think that the cheat still remains a cheat, and won't suspect. How did he escape? What spoiled my aim? What good luck saved this detective terror?"

Closing the door, and again respringing the lock, he tripped down the stair.

An hour later the man entered a dwelling in the best part of the city with a pass key which he carried.

Passing into the parlor, by the light there stood revealed—Captain Sleek—Sleek, with the face which Ninepins had given him, and this face, reflected in a large mirror on the opposite wall, drew from him a smile.

"It's got to be a different phiz, if I want to trap this keen hound," he said aloud. "He may have seen me in this and Ninepins must help me out again."

Suddenly stepping to the front window, he stood there, one ear pressed against the curtain.

"It went by," said he. "It seemed to stop, but after all it did not. Ah, it comes back. It is on the steps now!"

The bell tinkled lightly, as if a child had pulled it.

He did not answer the call.

The bell tinkled again.

"That's a child," said he. "The footsteps indicated it. I'll see."

He at once went to the outer door, to find there—Little Ruby!

"You, child? What brings you here?" he demanded, and drew her into the hall.

"Don't you know me? You are not the gentleman who sent me to this house for the little box," was the child's answer. "Neither are you the person who gave it to me—"

She cast a frightened look toward the door, but the hand of the captain closed on her arm.

"What about the box?" he asked. "Who sent you to this house to-night, child?"

"No one; but I know that you're in danger. Mamma thinks so from what the man said; but I don't believe you ever did anything really bad. The handsome man who waited for me at the clubhouse had your eyes, and he paid me well for my trouble."

"Go on."

"Mamma and I were watching the sick man, you know, and I was captured at the door by the man."

"By what man?"

"By the spy, I guess," cried the child, who had now been led into the parlor.

"And he saw the man on the couch?"

"No; that man ran away before he saw him, and then he talked sharp to mamma. I've come to warn the man who lives here, and if you're that one, for you have his eyes, I say—"

"Never mind, little one. The gentleman will be warned. Thank you and your mamma."

"She didn't send me. I came of my own accord."

Captain Sleek looked down into the upturned face and seemed to grate his teeth.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A WOMAN'S SECRET.

After parting with the banker near his home, the train spotter bent his steps to that part of the city where he had last seen Sara Shook. He wanted to see more of the strange woman who had taken such a prominent part in Jarold Jenks's life.

In one of the little rooms on the second floor he had left the robber-banker dead on the couch, and the shattered wall had baffled him in his attempt to make out the last message of the fugitive.

When he reached the place he found it dark and forbidding, on the outside at least.

Tracer tried the door without knocking, and, to his surprise, it yielded, and he entered.

Listening a while, he passed up the narrow stairs and stood at the door of the dead room. This door he softly opened, and looked into the dark chamber, silent enough to be the abode of the dead.

Then he entered, and, striking a match, held it above his head, to behold the couch against the shattered wall and a sheeted figure thereon.

The dead was still there, but the woman was gone.

The detective lifted the sheet to peer into the placid but strange-looking face of Jarold Jenks—the face Ninepins had made for him!

For a minute he looked at the face, and then let the sheet fall to its place.

"Where is the woman?" said he, aloud.

"Here!"

Tracer turned to confront the angular figure of Sara Shook in the doorway.

"You did not think I would run away and leave him here?" she continued.

"That is not the sort of woman I am."

"You have done right to keep watch over him," said the detective. "He has been kind to you."

"Never mind that. What he has done for me is not to be discussed here."

"But you knew him well. You did not want me to read the message on the wall."

"Bless you," laughed the woman. "It was your head, not the wall, I shot at."

There was a singular light in her deep, dark eyes.

"But the ball spoilt the dead man's last words. Was it a confession?"

"It may have been. He had a good deal to confess."

She came in, and he stepped over to the bed, in the light of the lamp which Sara Shook had in her hand.

"Did you know him when he came to you for asylum?"

"Not at first, but his voice told me who he was. Ninepins can change faces, but the voice remains the same."

"You know Ninepins?"

"Who does not know the face-fixer of New-York? He is dangerous because he is a genius, and you detectives must acknowledge that on more than one occasion Ninepins has beaten you with his brushes and little knives."

"It is true, woman, but sooner or later this bird of ill omen will find his cage."

"What have you found out about this dead man?" she suddenly asked.

"He was a fugitive from justice. Didn't he confide his secret to you?"

"No, sir, and I did not ask him for it. He needed assistance, he said, and that was enough for me. No need for me to inquire into Jarold Jenks's secrets."

"The secret you already hold—the one you have kept for years—was enough, was it?"

The woman started.

"It was enough, since you know there was a secret," retorted she. "So he was a criminal?"

"He was. He robbed his friend and partner."

"The man who was missing—Abel Marks? Perhaps he did not think that a crime, since he had known the Wall Street Shylock from childhood."

"It is not that alone, madam," returned the detective. "It is presumed that he was guilty of other deeds which forced him to seek an asylum here, in this disguised face."

Sara Shook placed the light on the table.

As if impressed by the Tracer's words and manner she seemed ready to speak more to the point.

"I came to first know him years ago. I was a nurse in a city hospital for children, and he came and tempted me. I am going to tell the story, for I am going away after the telling."

"All right, Sara. Go on!"

"Jarold Jenks and his wife were happy in their married life, until the first child came. With the advent of the little one came their first bitterness. They wanted a boy, and the babe was a girl, whose limbs were strangely drawn or misshapen. It was, in due time, sent to the hospital for the cure of its limbs, and the surgeons saw that it would be an easy cure."

"It was then that I came into this game of sin and deception. Jarold Jenks crossed my path with the wiles of the tempter backed by the curse of mankind—gold! There was a male child in another ward, and the two little ones really much resembled one another. It was fate. Tempted by his money, I effected an exchange of babes, and one night the cot in the ward was deserted, and Jarold Jenks carried home the boy who is now a blade after his father's kind. Not alone was I in this game of deceit; I shared with another, but long ago the grave closed over him, and I am the sole possessor of my secret, outside the home of the dead, yonder."

"He was kind to me, despite the fact that at times he greatly regretted the game we had played. He saw his heir grow to manhood a roystering scapegrace, in whom he could not take delight, and Prince Bullion, as the young spendthrift is known, ignorant of his parentage, stands to-day on the threshold of a secret which must cut short his career of sin."

"That is the story, sir. That is the secret of the past. I am Sara Shook, the old nurse, who helped Jarold Jenks to cheat the world and mankind. The babe, supposed to be another's, was said to have died in the hospital, but I kept

track of her. Smuggled from the place, but cured of the slight deformity, I watched her growth, keeping track of her from the moment she left the place to—her death."

"She is dead, then?"

"That you know, I fancy, for her death is a police mystery, but her identity remains hidden. Diamond Dess is that child! The woman murdered on M—Avenue was Jarold Jenks's babe! The mother does not know it, but the father did. He knew ere he died that the blade of an assassin found the heart of his child, and this knowledge in a measure drove him to the act which he did in this house. But what have you discovered? Are you on the trail of crime which starts from M—Avenue? Is that your mission?"

"In part it is. I have found Abel Marks—"

"Found him, have you?" cried Sara Shook. "Have unearthed the missing banker of Wall Street? Couldn't you fetch him here and let him look down into the face of his partner?"

"Not now, madam."

"Is he a fugitive from justice, too? Does he fear the unmasking of the secret as Jarold feared it?"

"Abel Marks will appear, but not yet awhile. He must remain secluded for the present."

Sara broke into a laugh.

"Life's mystery all the time," she exclaimed. "When I quit this house I will become a little mystery to my neighbors, for Sara Shook will vanish like the sunbeams."

"But not until after you have seen him put away?"

"No. Though he drew me into crime," said she, "I won't leave him until the grave has closed over him. What, think you, has been the feelings of that mother who consented to have her child replaced by another, and who in those years of secret silence looked upon the wild path cut by Blair Jenks, so-called?"

"What of his parentage?" asked the ferret.

"That is my secret."

"Then you know?"

"Yes, I do know; but you can't rob me of that secret, which, all these years, I have kept from Jarold Jenks and his wife."

Tom Tracer did not make the effort to wrest the secret from her, and left the room.

"Do what you will with the dead," Sara said, as she followed.

"I leave that to you."

"Thanks! I will see that he goes home."

"But you will not go with him?"

"I will! I want to stand once more before the woman I haven't met for years—not since I saw her one night in her own house with the boy in her arms."

Tracer proceeded down the stairs, and Sara Shook followed him to the room below.

"You saw Diamond Dess often, did you not?" he asked.

"A thousand times. I watched the development of her life. I even saw her married."

"She was a wife, then?"

"And Carlo Mayne was her husband."

"The handsome man who frequents the house on the avenue?"

"The same. Cold, cunning, and with the nature of the vengeful. I watched the courtship, if it can be called such. I did not approve, but the girl loved him, and—Well, she's dead now!"

Sara opened the door and held it ajar for the Tracer.

"She's a strange woman, but she proved faithful to Jarold Jenks," said the shadower, as he passed on down the street. "She kept the secret well through the years, and perhaps helped his child more than once. So they were man and wife! Captain Sleek, the arrow of crime points in your direction, and you may receive the shaft full in the heart!"

As the detective turned into another street a footfall that gave out no sound

came after him like the tread of the panther in the jungle.

The Train Spotter was in dire danger.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VULTURE AND HAWK.

Captain Sleek let the little girl out of the fine house and went back to the parlor.

"So Abel Marks is at large," said he. "He broke his word with Sammy, and is gone. What does this mean? What will the spy do?"

Then came the turn of the key in the outer lock, and Sammy Slack himself stepped into the hall and parlor, and, throwing his hat upon the table, he took a seat. He was uncommonly cool.

"You haven't heard of the escape?" questioned Captain Sleek, looking searchingly at the other. "You don't seem to know that the sick man's gone."

"Gone! The banker?"

"The man you brought back to New York without consulting me. Just because you got tired of keeping watch at Woodsdale you escort him back to the city to give him wing and let us fight for our very lives."

The look in Sammy's eyes became a stare when Captain Sleek added:

"The spy came just too late to find Abel Marks under the woman's care," he said.

"The spy!" he echoed. "Who told you?"

"A child; and this makes it all the more truthful. Mr. Slack, you must fight for your existence now."

"We can beat this detective hound!" cried Sammy. "There are two of us, and two heads are better than one. But, who is this detective?"

"I cannot tell, but I have a suspicion."

"Find out. Let me know him by sight or otherwise. I will take the trail. I am something of a man-hunter myself. But, about Abel? Where is he?"

"At home, perhaps."

"It seems to me he would go direct to the bank."

"I did not think of that. You may look."

Which Sammy Slack at once did.

He started away, and reached the bank in the dead of night, just too late to discover Tracer and Abel Marks emerge from the building.

He found the door securely locked. All was silence. No, Abel was not there, that was evident.

"Is he home?" he queried. "Did he go home instead of seeking the bank? If I thought Abel Marks was back there I'd roust him out before daylight."

But he did not carry out his suggestion; he slipped up Broadway and vanished.

In the gray light of another day Sammy Slack might have been seen in a little park on a bench embowered in the foliage of a clump of bushes; he was fast asleep.

Suddenly a young man crossing the park stopped and looked at the picture.

"It's the captain's partner," cried this individual. "It's the tall man called Sammy."

He went a little closer and bent over the man.

Blair Jenks, or Prince Bullion, after a night of worry and tarrying at the wine-cup, as was shown by his eyes, was going home when the strange but startling vision of Sammy Slack asleep in the park crossed his path.

He shook the sleeper and saw the eyes open.

"Come, don't you know me?" cried Blair.

Sammy gasped and looked again.

"Never saw you before in all my life. Don't see why you disturb a fellow—"

He broke his own sentence with a glance round the shrubbery, and seemed to realize his situation.

"I'm Blair," said Prince Bullion.

"You're the captain's friend."

"I don't know the captain."

The other laughed.

"The captain and I had an interview last night, and I want to talk with you."

"Sit down."

"Not here," exclaimed the roysterer. "I will see you in my room. It's not far, and I've two nests, you know."

Sammy rose and shook the sleep from his eyes, to be taken away by the young man.

Prince Bullion soon afterward ushered him into a fine room, elegantly furnished, and when he had shut the door he turned upon Sammy with:

"Where's the old banker?"

Sammy's eyes grew larger, but he did not speak.

"Come! Don't put on an innocent air," cried the young man. "I know. Where is the banker?"

"Which one?"

"Which one? By Jove! that's good, just as if you are the constituted guardian of both the gov'nor and Abel Marks. Which one? What if I should say the gov'nor?"

"Then I would tell you that I don't know."

In another instant Blair had seized the man's arm, and his fingers seemed to meet in Sammy's flesh.

"Let it be Abel Marks. It is your work. Don't lie to me. Where is Abel Marks?"

The tall one shook his head, but a pallor overspread his face.

"You know. Come, sir! It's a plot. You took Abel Marks out of town the night he vanished. What's the game? And where's the money of the firm?"

"I don't know."

"Who robbed the bank? Why, there's nothing in the safe. The securities are missing, and—"

"Ask the thief," put in Sammy, growing insolent as well as impatient.

"No such talk to me. You don't know who you're dealing with. They call me Blair Jenks, but I've lost that name. Jarold Jenks is a robber—I know that—but he didn't take all the funds. He couldn't do it. You robbed Abel Marks. You know you did."

In another instant Sammy Slack was on his feet, and his figure towered above the young man's.

"It is false!" he cried.

With an oath Blair flashed a revolver, but as he raised it his wrist was caught by the long hand of the other, and the weapon rendered useless.

"I can hold you like a fly," laughed Sammy Slack. "Don't you see, boy, that you're nothing in my hands. You can't get the best of me. I never robbed your father. I never robbed Abel Marks. Don't throw that into my teeth."

"But you're the captain's friend. You and Captain Sleek are in this game for money."

Sammy, in reply, dragged Blair over to a rich arm-chair and crushed him into it with a chuckle.

"This may be your nest, but I'm the master-bird in it just now," he cried.

Blair, white-faced, stared into his face, but did not speak.

"You can't bluff Sammy Slack," continued the tall one, who stood over Prince Bullion. "Now answer me a few questions, won't you?"

"That depends, sir."

"Does it? We'll see."

Sammy, with the coolness of a conqueror, drew a chair alongside the other and went on:

"You've been flying pretty high of late. Don't you know that birds of your plumage come to the end of their powers when they drop back to earth and flutter there in the mire?"

"Is that what you wanted to say to me?"

"Not exactly. It's only an introduction. I'm a little short of ready cash."

"Didn't the last play net you something?"

"Never mind the last play," said Sammy. "I'll take a little now—a few of the feathers that clothe you, my fine bird."

Blair flushed to the temples.

"It's downright robbery!" he exclaimed. "I'd as soon be held up on the streets."

"It's more secluded here," replied the tall man, showing his teeth in a sarcastic grin. "We'll call it a genteel trick, but you can't escape me. I'll take the nest egg. Come, hand it over."

Blair drew forth his pocketbook and threw it upon the table.

"Take it!" he exclaimed.

The hand of Sammy Slack reached out and raked in the pocketbook, after which he opened it and turned it upside down.

Nothing fell out, and the robber looked at Prince Bullion with a curious smile.

"You don't mean to tell me that you're broke?" he said.

"You see my pile."

"But you've got more than this. Come, a young man in your circumstances—a bird in this nice nest—has something more than the mere lining of it."

"Not a dollar."

Sammy flung the pocketbook back upon the table and stepped toward the door.

"By the way, how's the gold mine?" he asked.

"It's a fraud."

"You gave Jarold Jenks's check for it."

"Yes."

"How can it be a fraud? A young man who can get hold of a check for twenty thousand dollars can get more cash."

"But the supply's exhausted. You can't rob a pauper, Sammy Slack."

This irritated the tall man, and he came over to Blair, who looked up into his face with a comical leer.

"See here," he said, "why don't you get some cash of Carlo?"

"Carlo? I know no such man."

Blair broke into a laugh.

"You cannot hoodwink the 'bird,' as you call me. Carlo? Call him by whatever name you please, he is still Carlo, the man who kept the fine house for the murdered girl."

"How's that? Don't be so fast with the names of strangers, my bird."

"But I will use his. I will say that Carlo went to see Diamond Dess. Whatever relation they bore to one another, he was Carlo to her, and if the police knew—"

He stopped suddenly; the tall man's face had changed.

"Why don't you go on?" he asked.

"What about the police?"

"I say if the police knew that Carlo had two names, and that he was concerned in the vanishment of Abel Marks, the Wall Street banker, what do you think they'd do?"

"What could they do?"

"If they know that Carlo, or Captain Sleek, as some call him, went often to see Diamond Dess—that he may have been with her the night she was murdered in cold blood—that this man—this crony of yours, Sammy Slack, was her friend, don't you think there'd be a little investigation that might draw you into the snare?"

"By Jove! this is too much," cried the enraged man. "I'll twist your neck."

"If you can!"

Blair Jenks was on his feet, and the tall man had taken a step forward.

They stood face to face in the room, and looked at one another like waiting gladiators.

Suddenly the door opened.

Both men looked toward the portal, and saw there the sharply-outlined figure of a woman whose face was white and whose eyes fastened upon Blair with a wild glare.

"Don't touch him," she cried to Sammy Slack. "Don't lay hands on that young man as you value your life!"

Sammy's face grew dark with rage, and he looked at the woman with glowing brows.

"What right have you to say that I shall not twist this bird's neck?" he demanded.

"I have all the right in the world. Touch him if you dare! I know you, Sammy Slack, alias Martin France of old fame. Touch him now if you wish."

Sammy dropped his half-uplifted hands and walked toward the door.

"Go!" cried the woman.

He looked back at his almost victim, and crossed the step, slamming the door in the face of the pair.

Sara Shook merely laughed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TOLLED TO HIS DOOM.

Tom Tracer, the Train Spotter, hurrying from Sara Shook's house in the last quarter of the night when he had met the woman beside the sheeted dead, went straight to Waters's room.

The mad detective alone in the little place with his brain still harassed with the thought that he was the victim of fate, if not the legatee of a foul plot, was half asleep in a chair when the train detective aroused him.

"You have found him!" he cried, as once before upon Tracer's sudden appearance in that same room.

"Not yet, but I want to catch a little rest."

Waters pointed to a couch at one side of the room, and Tracer cast his body upon it.

Waters watched him awhile, and seeing that Tom did not care to talk, became silent and turned his head away.

The man who had tracked Tracer to the detective's room had stopped on the sidewalk below.

From the pavement in front of Sara Shook's house he had kept up this espionage, and now, baffled as it seemed, he stood undecided in the light of the nearest lamp watching the place.

"Shall I follow him?" he asked himself. "It's the old detective. What was he doing there? What but plotting against me with the woman Sara."

He entered the building and went upstairs to the first landing; he looked toward the door of Waters's room but still he hesitated.

"He may come out," he muttered. "That would be better than trying to get to him."

So he drew back and waited.

The hours crept on.

The night waned, and still this man stood guard outside Waters's door with his keen eyes on the alert.

Who was he?

Not Captain Sleek, for that individual could not have thrown himself on the detective's trail; not Sammy Slack, for he was on the eve of seeking the park for his nap; nor could the spy have been Blair Jenks, the wild blade.

In the shadows so abundant in the upper hallway stood the man watching Waters's door.

When at last the portal opened and a face came into view, the watcher drew deeper into the shadows and his eyes flashed.

"I almost feel myself at the end of the game," said he. "Tom will tell me all when he gets up, and I must have patience. But what if Tom is deceiving me? What if Tracer is in league with my enemies? For he has all to win if I fail, and I have stood in his way more than once."

"That was not the man I followed here," muttered the one on the watch. "It must be another man. Can he have changed his face in the room yonder? Is he in other garments, and will he slip past me and elude me at last?"

In a little while Waters came forth and passed down the stairs.

The other followed, but the nimble detective got away.

On the pavement below stood the baffled spy.

"Some other time," he said, and then he too vanished.

If he had gone back he would have found the door unlocked and the sleeping ferret at his mercy.

Had he climbed the stairs again he would have found Tom Tracer in the sound sleep which precedes the dawn, but fate or fortune took him away.

As for Tracer, he rose refreshed.

Waters was gone, but this did not bother him.

He knew the eccentric man, and did not look for him; so, after leaving a note on the table for him, he left the room.

In Tracer's mind it was to be the last day of the long trail.

The track was to be abandoned at the end before dark, and he wanted a fair day for the work.

Captain Sleek in another part of the city smoked in the fine room where little Ruby had warned him.

The man of plots and cool schemes was alone, but not for long.

Sammy Slack came in and threw himself down upon a sofa.

"See here," he cried, looking over at the silent Carlo. "Don't you know they suspect you?"

There was a look and a start, and Captain Sleek lost a little color.

"Who suspect me?"

"The young blade for one."

"Prince Bullion?"

"Yes."

"You've seen him?"

"I have."

"When did you see Prince Bullion?"

"Not an hour ago."

"Where?"

"In his new quarters."

"Well?"

"He makes some plain charges, that is, he talks pretty plainly concerning you and Diamond Dess."

Carlo came over to Sammy and shook him up.

"Tell me everything he said," he demanded. "Don't keep back a word. I'll choke the young game-cock!"

"I would have done so if the woman hadn't come in."

"What woman?"

"Why, the one who lives on Jarold Jenks's bounty."

"Oho! Sara Shook, the old nurse."

"Yes. She came in like a blast of storm, and I had to give up my little game."

"She drove you away, did she?"

"I couldn't stand her look nor her threat."

"What was the threat?"

"It was more in her look than in her tones. She called me the old name, for one thing."

"She's got that, has she?" laughed Captain Sleek.

"Got it pat. It went through me like a knife, and made Blair open his eyes. I never had anything to go through me like it before. Why, she is a holy terror."

"Terror enough for you, it seems. But, Sammy, there's got to be a cool play, one that ends the game in our favor or which gives the spoil to the detective."

"I believe you."

"It must be made at once."

"To-day, you mean."

"Not later than to-night. He can be found. You may not know a certain thing, but I'll tell you. The office holds but his effigy. He isn't dead."

"I would have guessed as much. But this effigy? What made him leave one in his rooms?"

"I thought I had finished him," smiled Captain Sleek. "It was the first failure of my career. It was a shot at point-blank range, but it failed."

"Where will we find him? If we could decoy this man to Woodsdale, say to the house behind the cedars—"

"That's capital, Sammy!" exclaimed Captain Sleek. "You deserve a crown for the suggestion. It's certainly worth a trail."

"But this man is cool and cunning. It would have to be a prize deftly arranged to toll him to the little place."

"We will bait the trap. He must be in Woodsdale to-night."

"But if he doesn't come, what then?"

"A quick play in this city! A cool game to the death, for it is now a victory or ruin."

Captain Sleek walked the room like a caged animal.

Watched by the other, he was impatient and anxious, and when he came to where Sammy sat he suddenly stopped.

"I'll make you the bait that tolls him to doom," he said.

"Me?"

"Why not? You're willing to risk something to get rid of this man, aren't you?"

"I am, but you see—"

"Hush! I will find him before night. You will get on the ten o'clock express at the Grand Central. You will be followed by this trail-hunter."

"In the same coach?"

"Perhaps. You don't fear the espionage?"

"It might be uncomfortable. He might nab me on the train."

"No. His eagerness to spring another trap and catch another bird will take him all the way to Woodsdale."

Sammy did not reply.

The job was not one he relished, but he submitted, and in a little while both men were smoking over the plan Captain Sleek had proposed.

"You must be sure that the trap is well set," said Sammy Slack. "A failure would destroy my hopes."

"And mine as well. I'll go up before you."

"And set the snare? Good! That gives me confidence."

"I will see that the trap is so well set that after to-night there will be no detective to bother us."

Sammy Slack did not breathe free again till he was away from his companion.

He waited for night.

He kept indoors and smiled when he thought of his visit to Blair Jenks and the coming of Sara Shook.

Captain Sleek was at work, and he had confidence in his friend.

More than once he went to the window and looked out upon the well-thronged street.

He tried to make out some familiar faces in the throng, but they did not materialize, and he saw the long shadows of the afternoon steal across the city stones.

"I'm the bait of the trap," said he. "I'm to toll the detective to Woodsdale. What if I fail? What if he arrests me on the train? I can get out of this game now. It's not too late."

He wavered.

Nothing but fear of Captain Sleek held him from the attempt his brain suggested.

He could have withdrawn, but he would have the Captain for his bitter foe, and he shuddered when he thought of that.

"No! We win or fall together, and Carlo is cool and sharp. I'll stick to Carlo!" he said.

He watched on till night came.

The lights came out one by one, and he heard the hours as they were struck by the nearest clock.

"It is half-past nine now," said he, glancing at his watch. "It is time."

Without much attempt to disguise himself, Sammy Slack slipped from the house and went uptown.

In the cab that drew him he leaned back and wondered how the plot would pan out.

"It's like setting a trap for foxes," he laughed. "They are seldom caught; but this one falls under Carlo's hand, and Carlo is slick."

He did not glance much among the crowd in the depot, but he noticed a man who appeared to have been watching him.

"It has succeeded," thought Sammy Slack. "The fox is on the trail."

In the smoker he took the seat suggested by Captain Sleek and smiled as the train pulled out.

The person he had seen was in the same coach, but now he did not appear to be watching him.

Sammy tried to look unconcerned, but he could not quiet his restive mind.

He was tolling a detective to his doom.

He was playing the greatest hand he had ever held, and the cards seemed to come naturally from the pack of fate.

The train slipping through the suburbs of New York gave something distract-

ive to Sammy's mind, but it could not obliterate the man's surroundings.

Woodsdale would soon be reached.

He wondered if Captain Sleek was ready with the trap.

He wondered, too, what plan he had taken to tell the detective that fortune awaited him in Woodsdale.

Ah, Carlo was sleek; he knew just what to do, and—

The whistle sounded in the night, and the few lights of the little station came into view.

Sammy prepared to quit the car.

As he rose he glanced at the suspected man; he was rising too.

"We've caught the fox," thought Mr. Slack. "The game is ours."

The next moment he stood on the platform of Woodsdale Station.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE VANISHMENT OF SARA SHOOK.

Let us for a moment turn from these scenes occurring outside the great city at night and go back to the metropolis itself to witness the end of a swift career.

The visit of Sammy Slack to Blair Jenks and the intervention of Sara Shook was an episode that more than startled that young blade.

The woman who held in her heart the secret of his life stood and gazed at him after Sammy's departure.

"You don't know who you are, young man," she suddenly said.

"My God! do you?"

Sara put out her hands to ward off the youth, who darted forward, and a laugh rippled over her lips.

"They call you Blair Jenks," said she.

"But I am not. He says so."

"He?"

"Jarold Jenks. In his own home he revealed the past and his wife confirmed the terrible revelation."

"Isn't that enough?"

"I would know it all. I would know the whole secret in its dark details. Something tells me that you know, woman. You must be the nurse."

There was a sudden start by Sara Shook, and she cast her eyes to the floor.

"Let me keep the secret," said she.

"You shall not."

He dashed at her, and beating down her arms, dragged her by main force over to the chair at the table and thrust her into it.

"You leave that chair when you have disclosed the secret, and not before then," he went on. "You must be Sara Shook, the name Martha Jenks muttered in my presence. Now, go on."

She did not answer him, but merely looked up into his face and seemed to hurl defiance into his teeth.

"The door is locked and the key is in my pocket," cried Prince Bullion.

"I swore never to tell the secret without his bidding, but since I have already broken that vow—for death absolves me—I can tell you."

He did not speak, but watched her, his face pale and his hands in a quiver.

Then for the next five minutes Sara Shook talked rapidly but in low tones.

Blair listened spellbound and did not once interrupt her.

"You have the story now," said the woman, at the conclusion of her startling narrative. "You know that what he told you that night in the library, when he came home with the strange face Ninepins had given him, was the truth, terrible as it seemed then. Diamond Dess was the child God gave the pair, and you—"

"You need not stop there!" cried Blair.

There was no reply, the woman looking up at him from the depths of the chair, with her breath almost stopped.

"Tell it all! You have kept track of me, for you would not have kept track of Diamond Dess without knowing what became of my parents."

"I kept track of them. I have followed them all through life. Your father is dead. He died in prison."

Blair Jenks's lips came together at this and he winced, but did not speak.

"He died branded for a crime which belonged to him. He was guilty. You cannot go back and say he was innocent, for he was not. Your father committed murder."

"A felon's son! And my mother? Of course she was little better," said Blair, bitterly.

The face before him grew ghastly.

"You should think well of your mother," said Sara Shook.

"But if the father was so steeped in crime the wife should have saved him. She may have been criminal too."

"She is living, but she wishes she were dead," came from the ashen lips of the woman.

"So do I!"

The next moment Sara Shook's tall figure stood before Prince Bullion, and her eyes appeared to look him through.

"Your mother stands before you," she cried.

There was a swift recoil on the young man's part, and his hands pushed her back.

"You, viperess? Then, indeed, am I a snake's hatching," he almost thundered.

"Don't touch me! You my mother? Then you did the lowest crime a woman ever did. You gave away your own for money. You sold your child for a nabob's gold. You gave me a name which was not mine, and let me live to see the years of manhood, only to hurl me into the depths where you grovelled!"

"Nevertheless, you have had a life we could not have given you," she said.

"I have lived in the light of crime, and I have touched the waters of ruin. You my mother? There's the door!"

He opened the door and covered the portal with his hand.

Sara Shook hesitated.

"The world is out there. In my heart you have no place. Go, or I'll strangle you!"

She advanced a step and stopped.

"I have another revelation."

"One's enough. Go!"

"You don't know who killed Diamond Dess—"

"I would have killed her myself if I had suspected the truth," he exclaimed. "The hand that killed her has my thanks."

"But, my son—"

"Not that name in my presence! The door is open and the path for you to tread henceforth lies out there."

He would have seized her, but she slipped past him.

In the doorway she paused and looked back.

The angular face was dark and the eyes strangely afire.

"The path you are on is nearly ended," she said with uplifted arm. "You stand in the shadow of fate, and why not, when you are a felon's child? What's ahead for you now? Where's the path with one ray of sunlight? The whole city will know the truth. New York will discover that Blair Jenks is Boston Kent."

Blair cried aloud in his agony, and the woman merely laughed.

"I'll find Jarold Jenks and settle with him for this deception which has dragged me to the level of the lowest."

"Then you will settle with the dead!"

Blair heard the last word as he sprang toward the statue in the door and landed where no one stood.

Sara Shook was gone!

He heard her feet on the stair and leaned out to see the last of her as she reached the pavement.

"My mother!" he groaned, re-entering the room. "Driven from one hell to another, where is there a spot of peace for me? Why not hunt her down and silence her tongue? She may have lied—no, no! Her story is too true. I am a felon's child!"

Blair dropped into a chair, and the moments slipping by found him there with his white face buried in his hands and his figure in a tremor.

And the woman?

Back she went to the scene of death.

Sara Shook seemed to take a wild delight in the revelation she had made.

Once she said aloud:

"It makes all things even. Once he ran over me in the streets with his rig and tumbled me into the gutter. Then I went to the hospital and endured the tortures of the accident ward for three months. I have 'evened up' with him, though he is of my flesh and blood. I knew the blow would break his spirit and crush him. He is proud and haughty, and in the heyday of his fame he rode on the top waves. It did me no good to see my offspring there. When I had committed the crime of years ago I hardened my heart and lived on Jarold Jenks's gold, taking it in payment for my silence and my crime. Why endure the rest? They will ask me why he died in my house. They will want to know why he left a message on the wall over the couch, and the man-hunters of Gotham will give me no rest. Why play out the game against those ferrets, Sara Shook?"

She went into the little room with its silent tenant and remained there some time.

"I could create a sensation before I go by telling who killed Diamond Dess," she went on, halting in the parlor on the first floor. "I could simplify matters; why not do it? They will find him in the end. He cannot escape these men of the trail. He will fall into snares they set for him. But I might give them a clew. I know who is on the trail. I know the man at whom I shot, to shatter the wall over his head and spoil Jarold Jenks's last sentence. Why not tell him?"

She sat down and wrote at a table for half an hour.

The clock ticked on and the day waned.

Sara Shook wrote laboriously, for she was no scholar and the sentences dropped slowly from her pen.

At last she rose and folded the paper.

She sealed it in an envelope and wrote upon it the name of "Thomas Tracer, Detective, City," then looked at it once more as if satisfied, and hid it in her bosom.

Ten minutes later the tall figure of Sara Shook glided through sunlight and shadow along the pavements of New York.

She stopped at a letter-box and mailed her letter.

As she turned away she smiled as if to remind herself of the coolness of her well-planned act.

No one saw her now.

She swept on toward the Bridge, tracked by no one and regarded not by a single one in the throngs of hurrying thousands.

But suddenly some one touched her arm.

The woman looked over her shoulder and uttered a slight scream.

"I know you, madam. You are the lady who once called on Mr. Jenks and had a long talk with him in the private office. I am Frank Flint, the special accountant of the bank."

"And you want to see me? Not now?" and Sara Shook tore loose from the young man's grip and pressed on.

"It's the same woman; there's not the least doubt of it," said the bookkeeper. "Jasper would know her, too, if he could see her. She knows where Jenks is. Shall I let her escape me? I can't afford to."

But the tall shape was already gone, and Frank Flint stared into the crowd which had swallowed her up.

He turned back, the last person to recognize Sam Shook, the nurse, alive.

He returned to his little quarters and once more thought of his meeting with the dark-faced creature.

"I should have held her," said he. "I see what I have missed. The detective wanted to know what I was doing with Diamond Dess' ring. I did not tell him,

but perhaps he knew. She gave it to me for a little favor done her in the park one night. Does he know that? I see how it might get me into trouble, now that she's been murdered, and I'll let it go."

Frank Flint did not quit the house until night once more spread her wings over the city.

Then he slipped from his lodgings and went up-town.

The door of Abel Marks's mansion opened to him and Nora greeted him in the hall.

Possibly if he had gone in another direction he might have seen a crowd of people bending over something silent and human in shape on one of the piers.

He might have edged his way into the crowd and looked down into the drenched face and dark features of the woman who had been fished from the river.

But he did not see this; he looked into a living face and sparkling eyes.

He did not hear the swish of the waters that sang the song of the dead; he did not stand where little pools gathered on the pier and look into the face of Sara Shook.

And when he left the house the clocks struck eleven, and at that moment, some miles out of New York, Sammy Slack and the fox of the trail alighted at Woodsdale Station and by different ways betook themselves to the house among the cedars.

The Train Spotter stood at the threshold of victory, if the hand of the enemy was not strong enough to deprive of triumph the man who never failed, no matter who opposed him on the trail of crime.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FOX'S LAST RUN.

Sammy was so sure of his game that he chuckled nearly all the way to the house among the cedars.

Well did he know that the detective, the cool and cautious Tracer, was in the toils, and that beyond the door of the little house which had been Abel Marks's prison Captain Sleek waited for the prey.

Sammy proceeded toward the trap with such feelings, but near the door he hid among the trees and waited.

He wanted to see the game go in; he wanted to make sure that the bird was in the snare; and then, valiant fellow that he was, he would try and be in at the death.

Hidden by the trees, he held his breath and watched.

Suddenly he heard footsteps so close that he started and looked with distended eyes.

A shadow with human shape stood before him, and before he could raise a hand he was in the trap himself!

It was a rude awakening to a cherished dream, and the revolver that looked into his face from the distance of two feet sent a cold chill through his blood.

"Carlo is yonder," said the apparition. "He is in the trap set for me."

Sammy could not find his tongue till the cold barrel of the weapon touched his forehead.

"You will come with me, Mr. Slack. You will ring and see that Carlo answers the signal."

Sammy's knees seemed to smite one another, but he could do nothing less than obey.

He shuffled toward the house and mounted the porch with Tom the detective.

There was no reply, but the door was opened.

Into the front room stepped the two men.

Sammy looked pleased, but said nothing.

"Is he gone?" asked the ferret. "He was here. He sent you to toll me thither, didn't he?"

Silence and a biting of lips, nothing more.

Tracer searched the house.

It yielded nothing.

The whistle of a train from the north startled Sammy Slack and he caught the detective's eye.

"He is going back to the city, I understand. Carlo Mayne, alias Captain Sleet, is making his last run, Mr. Slack."

It was true.

The human figure that boarded the night express for New York cuddled down in a seat in the darkest part of the foremost coach and looked a bitter look at the little depot as it vanished.

The next morning in the first flushes of dawn the detective landed in the city.

He was not alone, but in a short time he had lost his companion, and the tall figure of Sammy Slack might have been seen behind the bars of a station-house cell.

"Now for the main bird!" said Tom.

The man who ran up the steps of the fine nest on O—Street did not look much like the Train Spotter, but it was he.

Silence greeted him in the house and the fragrance of Havanas permeated the parlor.

But Captain Sleet was gone.

Tom Tracer moved from room to room and from floor to floor.

Always on the alert, he sought for the fugitive, for the confession drawn from Sammy Slack, willing to betray his partner in the shadow of the noose, had removed the last vestige of the curtain of mystery involving the fate of Diamond Dess.

At last the detective came back to a certain little room in the house and lifted a trap door in the floor.

Revolver in hand, he descended a flight of narrow steps, and with the lantern he carried made his way down a dark passage to a door set in the solid wall.

He found this door locked, and beyond it, so far as he knew, lay silence and the river.

For some time the ferret stood at this door and then went back.

It opened behind him, and just as he shut the door at the foot of the stairs.

The face that looked out from the darkness was wild and full of vengeance.

It was the face Ninepins had fixed up, but it had Captain Sleet's cold eyes, now seeming to flash with a strange light.

Tom Tracer came back to the door.

This time he found it unlocked.

He pushed it open and held up his lantern.

As the light penetrated the gloom ahead he uttered a cry, for against the stone wall of the dungeon stood a man, and in his hand was gripped the coward's weapon, the dagger.

Tracer touched the man and the body dropped, the dagger, a black-handled one, falling with it to the stones.

The detective knew he was at the end of the trail.

He had found the murderer of Diamond Dess, but the bar of earthly justice would never call him to account.

Captain Sleet, alias Carlo Mayne, the husband of the poor girl, was beyond the hand of human vengeance, and the detective saw that the same dagger which had taken the girl's life had avenged her.

Sammy Slack had told the plot.

He detailed how he and Carlo Mayne had plotted to rob the Wall Street firm of Marks & Jenks, how they enticed Abel Marks from the city to Woodsdale as a part of the plot, how they intended to rob him, first by holding him for ransom and afterward by blackmail, the Captain having discovered a chapter from his past which was not just of the best, and how they expected to fleece Jarold Jenks in much the same manner, but principally through his supposed son, Blair.

It was not until after the death of Diamond Dess, killed in a passion by Carlo, who, the first night Tom Tracer saw him emerge from the girl's house from the old General's window, went back unobserved, quarrelled with his

beautiful wife and stabbed her, that the young head of the plot discovered that she was Jarold Jenks's child, and it was this discovery which angered him so intensely against himself.

Abel Marks recovered the papers which Carlo took from his house by deception, and that before they were read by any one, and the little secret of his past was made safe by fire.

Jarold Jenks's widow sold the mansion and disappeared soon after his death, while Prince Bullion, the son of Sara Shook, took the downward course and in a brief time reached the end of the primrose path.

Some wondered why he vanished, but he kept the secret revealed by Sara to the end of his career, and left behind him nothing but the record of a blighted name.

Sammy Slack got the full term for conspiracy, and Waters recovered his mind, but often went back to the time when he "fought fate," as he called it, and only missed catching the murderer of Diamond Dess by a hair.

Nora Marks became the wife of Frank Flint, the young accountant, while Jasper, the bookkeeper, remained in the employ of the banking house on Wall Street.

The old General drifted away from the house opposite the scene of Carlo's crime and vanished completely, and Tom Tracer did not care to keep track of him.

But for the cleverness of the Train Spotter the plot against Abel Marks would have been successful, and Captain Sleet and his partner not only would have reaped a harvest of gold, but the mystery of Diamond Dess would have remained one of the unsolved puzzles of city crime.

If Captain Sleet died in the little underground chamber which he had set apart for a moment of desperation, Sammy Slack walked from the prison and tried to become a better man; but the old life was too much for him, and he fell back into his crooked paths and in time became Convict No. 2,223, and looked out upon little patches of sky through the iron diamond.

Tracer was very properly proud of his last exploit, and after receiving the thanks of the Inspector went back to his duty, and the Train Spotter is to-day one of the keenest ferrets in the City of Millions and Mystery.

THE END.

NEXT DIME LIBRARY, NUMBER 904!

BUFFALO BILL'S TANGLED TRAIL;

OR,

Gentleman Jack, the Man of Many Masks

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

Beadle's Dime Library.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES.

- 896 Kent Keen, the Crook-Crusher.
- 888 Nightshade in New York.
- 879 Falcon Flynn, the Flash Detective.
- 871 The Crook Cashier.
- 859 Clew-Hawk Keene's Right Bower.
- 847 Hiram Hawk, the Harlem Detective.
- 840 Major Bullion, Boss of the Tigers.
- 831 Shadowing the London Detective.
- 817 Plush Velvet, the Prince of Spotters.
- 803 The Bogus Broker's Right Bower.
- 788 The Night-Hawk Detective.
- 779 Silk Ribbon's Crash-out.
- 766 Detective Zach, the Broadway Spotter.
- 751 The Dark Lantern Detective.
- 736 The Never-Fail Detective.
- 724 Captain Hercules, the Strong Arm Detective.
- 711 Dan Damon, the Gilt-Edge Detective.
- 701 Silver Steve, the Branded Sport.
- 694 Gideon Grip, the Secret Shadower.
- 684 Velvet Van, the Mystery Shadower.
- 678 The Dude Desperado.
- 671 Jason Clew, the Silk-Handed Ferret.
- 664 Monk Morel, the Man-Hunter.
- 654 Sol Sphinx, the Ferret Detective.
- 642 Red Pard and Yellow.
- 608 Silent Sam, the Shadow Sphinx.
- 592 Captain Sid, the Shasta Ferret.
- 579 Old Cormorant, the Bowery Shadow.
- 569 Captain Cobra, the Hooded Mystery.
- 559 Danton, the Shadow Sharp.
- 550 Silk Hand, the Mohave Ferret.

BUFFALO BILL NOVELS.

By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

- 900 Buffalo Bill's Rough Riders.
- 895 Buffalo Bill's Secret Ally.
- 890 Buffalo Bill's Life-Stake.
- 882 The Three Bills: Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill and Band-box Bill; or, The Bravo in Broadcloth.
- 874 Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Braves.
- 869 Buffalo Bill's Road-Agent Round-up.
- 863 Buffalo Bill's Death Charm.
- 857 Buffalo Bill's Royal Flush.
- 851 Buffalo Bill's Double Dilemma.
- 845 Buffalo Bill's Redskin Ruse.
- 830 Buffalo Bill's Boys in Blue.
- 826 Buffalo Bill's Sharp-Shooters.
- 822 Buffalo Bill's Best Bower.
- 816 Buffalo Bill's Red Trail.
- 812 Buffalo Bill's Death-Knell.
- 794 Buffalo Bill's Winning Hand.
- 787 Buffalo Bill's Dead Shot.
- 781 Buffalo Bill's Brand.
- 777 Buffalo Bill's Spy Shadower.
- 769 Buffalo Bill's Sweepstake.
- 765 Buffalo Bill's Dozen; or, Silk Ribbon Sam.
- 761 Buffalo Bill's Mascot.
- 757 Buffalo Bill's Double.
- 750 Buffalo Bill's Big Four; or, Custer's Shadow.
- 743 Buffalo Bill's Flush Hand.
- 739 Buffalo Bill's Blind; or, The Masked Driver.
- 735 Buffalo Bill and His Merry Men.
- 731 Buffalo Bill's Beagles; or, Silk Lasso Sam.
- 727 Buffalo Bill's Body Guard.
- 722 Buffalo Bill on the War-path.
- 716 Buffalo Bill's Scout Shadowers.
- 710 Buffalo Bill Baffled; or, The Deserter Desperado.
- 697 Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Brotherhood.
- 691 Buffalo Bill's Blind Trail; or, Mustang Madge.
- 667 Buffalo Bill's Swoop; or, The King of the Mines.
- 658 The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas.
- 653 Lasso King's League; or, Buck Taylor in Texas.
- 649 Buffalo Bill's Chief of Cowboys; or, Buck Taylor.
- 644 Buffalo Bill's Bonanza; or, Silver Circle Knights.
- 632 Buffalo Bill's Grip; or, Oath Bound to Custer.
- 629 Buffalo Bill's Pledge; or, The League of Three.
- 189 Wild Bill's Gold Trail; or, The Desperate Dozen.
- 175 Wild Bill's Trump Card; or, The Indian Heiress.
- 168 Wild Bill, the Pistol Dead Shot.

By Buffalo Bill.

- 839 The Ranch King Dead-Shot.
- 820 White Beaver's Still Hunt.
- 807 Wild Bill, the Wild West Duelist.
- 800 Wild Bill, the Dead-Center Shot.
- 639 Buffalo Bill's Gold King.
- 599 The Dead Shot Nine; or, My Pards of the Plains.
- 414 Red Renard, the Indian Detective.
- 401 One-Armed Pard; or, Borderland Retribution.
- 397 The Wizard Brothers; or, White Beaver's Trail.
- 394 White Beaver, the Exile of the Platte.
- 319 Wild Bill, the Whirlwind of the West.
- 304 Texas Jack, the Prairie Rattler.
- 243 The Pilgrim Sharp; or, The Soldier's Sweetheart.
- 83 Gold Bullet Sport; or, Knights of the Overland.
- 52 Death-Tracker, the Chief of Scouts.

By Leon Lewis, Ned Buntline, etc.

- 773 Buffalo Bill's Ban; or, Cody to the Rescue.
- 682 Buffalo Bill's Secret Service Trail.
- 629 Buffalo Bill's Daring Role; or, Daredeath Dick.
- 517 Buffalo Bill's First Trail; or, The Express Rider.
- 153 Buffalo Bill, Chief of Scouts.
- 117 Buffalo Bill's Strange Pard; or, Dashing Dandy.
- 92 Buffalo Bill, the Buckskin King.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS.

- 897 The Six-Shot Spotter.
- 887 The Stranger Sport from Spokane.
- 873 The Sport Detective's Colorado Clew.
- 860 The Spangled Sport Shadower.
- 843 The Crescent City Sport.
- 832 Gid Gale's Block Game.
- 804 The King Pin of the Leadville Lions.
- 786 Chicago Charlie's Diamond Haul.
- 776 Chicago Charlie, the Columbian Detective.
- 758 The Wizard King Detective.
- 723 Teamster Tom, the Boomer Detective.
- 709 Lodestone Lem, the Champion of Chestnut Burr.
- 695 Singer Sam, the Pilgrim Detective.
- 688 River Rustlers; or, the Detective from 'Way Back.
- 673 Stuttering Sam, the Whitest Sport of Santa Fe.
- 666 Old Adamant, the Man of Rock.
- 618 Kansas Karl, the Detective King.
- 552 Prince Primrose, the Flower of the Flock.
- 528 Huckleberry, the Foot-Hills Detective.

BY J. W. OSBON.

- 877 Cool Creede, the Dead-Shot.
- 759 The Sport from St. Louis.
- 518 Royal Richard, the Thoroughbred.

NEW ISSUES.

- 903 The Train Detective; or, Captain Sleet's Cool Strike. By Capt. Howard Holmes.
- 904 Buffalo Bill's Tangled Trail; or, Gentleman Jack the Man of Many Masks. By Col. P. Ingraham.
- 905 Shasta Sam, the Sparkler; or, Kent Keen's Knock-out. By J. W. Osbon.

LATEST ISSUES.

- 902 Soft Velvet, the Man from Sandrock; or, The Gold Bank Sports. By Wm. R. Eyster.
- 901 The Hotel Swell-Sharp; or, The Siren Shadower. By Albert W. Aiken.
- 900 Buffalo Bill's Rough Riders; or, Texas Jack's Sharp-Shooters. By Col. P. Ingraham.
- 899 The Double-Quick Detective; or, High Hustling for the Man in Gray. By Wm. H. Manning.

A new issue every Wednesday.

Beadle's Dime Library is for sale by all Newsdealers, ten cents per copy, or sent by mail on receipt of twelve cents each. BEADLE & ADAMS, Publishers, 98 William street, New York.